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THE
HISTORY
OF
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE COMMENCEMENT AND THE PROGRESS OF

The Reformation

FROM THE THIRTEENTH TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

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THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

AT THE COMMENCEMENT AND DURING THE PROGRESS OF
THE REFORMATION.

CENTURY THE THIRTEENTH.

CHAP. V.

THE GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN
THIS CENTURY.

THE gloom of ignorance in the thirteenth century was exceedingly great. Nor was it abated, but, in some respects, rather increased, by the growing celebrity of the Aristotelian philosophy. For by it the understandings of men were furnished with polemical weapons, but by no means enlightened with useful truths. Endless questions were started; and as every disputant, by the very nature of the learning then in vogue, was much more engaged in confounding his adversary, than in explaining any one object of science, hence, every serious inquirer after truth must have been embarrassed beyond measure. The controversial combatants, while they raised and agitated the dust of contentions, suffocated each other, and gave no real light either to themselves, or to the world in general. The unlettered part of mankind admired what they called their “seraphic”* skill and ingenuity, little suspecting that these disputatious doctors were not, in their knowledge, many degrees removed above the most ignorant and vulgar. Some few there were of superior genius and

* Bonaventura was called the seraphic doctor; Francis, the seraphic father.

penetration, who saw through the sophistry of the fashionable learning, and cultivated a more reasonable mode of intellectual improvement.

Roger Bacon, the Franciscan Friar, stands distinguished among these. His knowledge of astronomy, optics, and mathematics, as well as of Greek and Oriental learning, was wonderful for those times. But he and a very few others shone in vain, except to themselves, in the firmament of knowledge. All feared, scarcely any aided, and very few understood them. Bacon himself, the glory of the British nation, was many years confined in a loathsome prison, and was strongly suspected of dealing in magic. I know no evidence of his piety and love of evangelical truth; and therefore it is not consistent with the design of this History to enlarge on his character. But a few words expressive of his contempt of the learning of his contemporaries deserve to be quoted.* “Never,” says he, “was there so great an appearance of wisdom, nor so much exercise of study, in so many faculties and in so many countries, as within these last forty years. For doctors are every where dispersed, in every city and borough, especially by the two studious orders, when at the same time there never was so great ignorance. The herd of students fatigue themselves, and play the fool about the miserable translations of Aristotle, and lose their time, their labour, and their expense. Appearances alone engage them; and they have no care to acquire real knowledge, but only to seem knowing in the eyes of the senseless multitude.”

Bacon, by the two studious orders, means the Dominicans and Franciscans, who were almost the only orders which devoted themselves to study. These men had AMPLE buildings and princely houses.† They attended the death beds of the rich and great, and urged them to bequeath immense legacies to their own orders. The subtle jargon of the schools infected their whole semblance of learning. However, as they appeared more knowing, and were certainly more studious than the other orders, they gained much ground in this century; and indeed till the time of the institution of the Jesuits, they were the pillars of the papacy. Persecution of heretics, so called, formed a great part of their employment. The Domi-

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 637, note (d).

† History of the Abbey of St. Alban's, by Newcombe.

nicans* in particular were the founders of the Inquisition. These last came into England about the year 1221, and first appeared at Oxford. The Franciscans were first settled at Canterbury in 1234. They both cultivated the Aristotelian philosophy, and being the confidential agents of the pope, they, under various pretences, exacted large sums of money through the kingdom, and fleeced even the abbots of the monasteries. The bishops and secular clergy saw themselves excluded by these means from the confidence of the laity. For, in auricular confessions, and other superstitions of the times, the friars had, by the pope's authority, very much arrogated to themselves the power which had formerly been possessed by the clergy.†

The Franciscans particularly undermined the influence of the secular ecclesiastics by popular practices; they preached both in towns and in the country: they pretended to no property: they lived on the contributions of their audiences, and walked barefoot and in mean habits. On Sundays and holydays crowds were collected to hear them; and they were received as confessors in preference to the bishops and clergy: and thus, when the credit of the other monastic orders was well nigh exhausted, and the secular clergy, through immoralities, had been reduced to contempt, two new orders, having the semblance of worth, but not the substance, revived the authority of the Romish church, supported the papacy, strengthened every reigning superstition, and, by deep-laid plans of hypocrisy, induced numbers to enrich both the papacy and the monastic foundations.

A remarkable instance of papal tyranny, exercised through their means in this century, will show the abject slavery and superstition under which this Island groaned. In 1247 Innocent IV. gave a commission to John the Franciscan, as follows: "We charge you, that if the major part of the English prelates should make answer, that they are exempt from foreign jurisdiction, you demand a greater sum, and compel them, by ecclesiastical censures, to withdraw their appeals, any privilege or indulgence notwithstanding."

This was the famous "NON OBSTANTE" clause, by which the pope, in the plenitude of his dominion, assumed to

* These were also called Jacobins, from their settlement in St. James's-street in Paris.

† Hist. Abbey of St. Alban's

himself the same dispensing power in the church, which king James II. did long after in the state. But the punishment of the former for his temerity and arrogance followed not so soon as in the case of the latter. For God had put into the hearts of princes and statesmen to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled.* And thus the wickedness of men in neglecting his Gospel was justly punished.

So shameless were the popes at this time in their exactions, and so secure was their hold on the abject superstition of mankind, that they grossly defrauded even the Franciscans themselves, and were not afraid of the consequences. Men, who received not the testimony of Jesus Christ, and refused submission to his easy yoke, were induced to kiss the iron rod of an Italian tyrant.

Two observations of Matthew Paris, taken from different parts of his history, and compared together, seem to me to illustrate in a good degree the nature of the subjection in which the spirits of men were held in those times. Speaking of the innumerable oppressions and corruptions of the popedom, which particularly prevailed during the long reign of king Henry III., the pusillanimous successor of king John, he breaks out into an animated apostrophe to the pope:—"Holy father, why do you permit such disorders? you deserve the hardships you undergo: you deserve to wander like Cain through the earth.—I would know what preferment an Englishman ever obtains in Italy? What just reason can possibly be assigned, why foreigners should prey on the revenues of our church?—Our sins have brought these calamities upon us."† The historian alludes to the residence of Innocent IV. at Lyons, where he was obliged to hide himself from the factions, which had expelled him from Italy at that time. I observe also, that this is that same pope, who gave the imperious commission to John the Franciscan, mentioned above, which commission also was dated from Lyons. If the reader lay all these circumstances together, the unexampled tyranny of the papal measures, the shameless violation of every principle of equity and decorum in the conduct of the Italian legates and agents, the strong indignation expressed against these things by such learned men as Matthew Paris, and even the open opposition

* Rev. xvii. 17.

† Collier's Ecc. vol. i.

made to the pope in those times. he may be disposed to wonder why the Roman hierarchy was not destroyed by a combination of princes and states. If this be a difficulty, the consideration of another passage of Matthew Paris will sufficiently explain it. Though he himself has given us accounts of the enormities of king John, who is represented as being one of the worst of princes, and one of the worst of men, yet he observes, "We ought to hope, and most assuredly to trust, that some good works, which he did in this life, will plead for him before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. For he built one abbey, and dying bequeathed a sum of money to another." So grossly ignorant was this ingenious and valuable historian, of the all-important article of justification by the merit of Jesus Christ alone, through faith! It was the revival of this truth which subverted the foundation of the Roman religion at the time of the Reformation. For while men allow themselves to doubt of THE SUFFICIENCY of Christ as a Saviour, when the conscience is harassed with doubts or perplexities, it will naturally betake itself to any superstitions which happen to prevail, in order to pacify the mind. And the popedom held out, by monastic institutions and a variety of other means, such a quantity of false reliefs to a guilty conscience, that even king John might seem to merit the kingdom of heaven by certain good works. M. Paris himself was entangled in the same nets of Pharisaical religion. So were the greater part of mankind throughout Europe at that time. We may see, however, that the Waldenses could find peace and relief of conscience, and the expectation of heaven through Jesus Christ alone, by faith; and hence, were enabled to despise the whole popedom with all its appendages; while others, who trembled in conscience for their sins, and knew not the holy wisdom of resting on Christ alone for salvation, might swell with indignation at the wickedness of the court of Rome, yet not dare to emancipate themselves from its bonds. It has been said by those who are willing to palliate the Romish abominations, that such a power as that of the pope was necessary at that time, to tame the ferocious spirits of men; and that the power of the pope preserved some order in society.* It may be allowed that

* On the contrary, it was the cause of wars and tumults—it continually *dissolved* all bonds and treaties, and never enforced them without *really* inflicting a deeper wound upon society.—ED.

it might unite, but it united in iniquity. Men were held by it in the bonds of superstition, and were even encouraged to live in wickedness, by false hopes of heaven. Such hopes did not sanctify but corrupted their minds: whereas the faith of Christ at once gives peace to the conscience, and leads it to true holiness.

To do justice to the real protestant character it ought to be known, that the idolatry, the encouragement of sin, and the self-righteous superstitions, subversive of the real merit of Christ, and the grace of the Gospel, were not less flagrant in the popedom than they have been represented, and were understood to be by our fathers. Therefore, against some modern attempts to give a specious colour to the Roman abominations, it may be proper, in addition to what has already been stated, to give two authentic facts, which will not need much comment.

In the year 1234, Pope Gregory IX., willing to revive the cause of the eastern crusades, which, through a series of disastrous events, was now much on the decline; and feeling the connection between this cause and the credit of the popedom; by a bull directed to all Christendom invited men to assume the cross, and proceed to the Holy Land. "Notwithstanding," says he, "the ingratitude of Christians, the goodness of God is not withdrawn from them. His* providence is still actively engaged to promote the happiness of mankind; his remedies suit their temper; his prescriptions are proportioned to their disease.—The service to which they are now invited is an EFFECTUAL ATONEMENT for the miscarriages of a negligent life: the discipline of a regular penance would have discouraged many offenders so much, that they would have had no heart to venture upon it; but the HOLY WAR is a compendious method of discharging men from guilt, and restoring them to the Divine favour. Even if they die on their march, the intention will be taken for the deed, and many in this way may be crowned without fighting."

Veracity, which is the capital quality of a real historian, requires me to bear witness to the strict truth of the representations of Romish evils, in the times in which they really did prevail. In opposition, therefore, to the glosses of those, who seem to maintain, that papal indulgences had no connection with men's eternal state, but related only to their ecclesiastical privileges in this life,

* Collier's Ecc. vol. i.

let it be submitted to the reader, whether every person who reads the bull of Gregory IX., must not have understood, that he pretended in the name of God to absolve the crusaders from real guilt, and to ensure to them the kingdom of heaven : whether he did not in effect oppose the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, and teach men to ground their justification from God, in contempt of that atonement, on the merit of the performance of the military service, which he enjoined. It is easy to multiply futile distinctions ; but to what purpose are they introduced at all, when the obvious practical sense of the bull could only be that which I have mentioned, when it was so understood, and when it induced men to act with such hopes and views as have been stated ?

Indeed, while severe penances had been in repute, and men were in the habit of submitting to undergo them, the atonement of Christ had long been rendered in effect insignificant ; and self-righteous prospects of the Divine favour had been encouraged throughout the Christian world. But the evil was now multiplied exceedingly. The additional doctrine of commutation for penances, while it removed the mind still farther from the faith of Christ, and fixed its dependence more strongly on the popedom, opened the floodgates of wickedness and vice ; taught men to gratify every disposition of corrupt nature, and to believe such gratifications consistent with a prospect of gaining the Divine favour. It is then to NO PURPOSE for men to declaim with Matthew Paris against the corruptions of this or that pope, while with him they maintain the self-righteous principle of popery itself. Evils of the worst kind must prevail, while we think ourselves capable of making atonement for our sins by any kind of works whatever. Let us learn the true humility and the genuine faith of the Gospel, which works by the love of God and man ; and then the practical evils will vanish for want of a foundation. Protestants will always have a strong temptation to embrace some self-righteous notions, as those of Popery or Socinianism, or perhaps they may ultimately have recourse to Atheism itself, when they neglect the real peculiarity of Christianity. These considerations merit a very serious attention : they evince the importance of the REFORMATION, and illustrate the nature of its fundamental principles.

The other fact, which demonstrates the genuine charac-

ter of the religion which predominated in Europe, I have extracted from a work lately published.* John Maryns was abbot of St. Alban's about the end of the thirteenth century, whose dying words are recorded to have been to this effect: "O holy Alban, whom I have loved and addressed as my best aid! as I have existed and lived by thy help, so, O glorious Saint! defend me from the pains of hell." Who this same Alban was, or whether he ever existed at all, are questions not easily answered, nor is it material to our purpose to inquire whether he was a real or a fictitious saint; but it is evident that John Maryns, by a solemn act of worship, placed the same confidence in him, which Stephen did in Jesus Christ, when he committed his departing spirit into his hands. The distinctions, it seems, insisted on by the Papists, between the higher and inferior kinds of worship, are futile evasions. Serious worshippers of their communion practically opposed the fundamental maxim of Christianity, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man."† The devotions of Maryns were those then in fashion. The idolatry of the Romish communion is evident; and, when the reader refers to the doctrines of the Waldenses, and to their writings, he will see how far their representations of Anti-Christ are founded in fact.

That the ecclesiastical powers in these miserable times were not at all inclined to promote piety and virtue among their subjects, but that they studied chiefly their secular emoluments, appears from numberless evidences in this century. Let it suffice in this place to mention two. First, the Franciscans and Dominicans were employed in enlisting men into the service of the crusades by Gregory IX., the author of the impious bull mentioned above. They engaged in the business with much ardour: and as it often happened that persons, who in the warmth of zeal had taken the Cross, repented afterwards, when they began to think seriously of the difficulties of the enterprise, these friars were employed to release such devotees from their vows, on the payment of a fine. It may easily be conceived, that much wealth would be amassed by this dispensing power.‡ Secondly, in 1242 Innocent IV. sent a provisional bull to king Henry III. of England, which informed him, that if he should happen to lay violent

* History of the Abbey of Saint Alban's, by Newcombe, p. 203.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5.

‡ Collier, vol. i.

hands on an ecclesiastic, and to fall under the censure of the canons, he might be absolved on submitting to the customary penance!*

At this time, during the prevalence of the Aristotelian philosophy, the doctrine of "grace of congruity" was in high repute: in other words, justification by men's own works was insisted on: and while some decent show of respect was paid in words to the merits of Christ, the real meritorious objects, on which men were taught to place their hope, were some performances, by which they might, in a lower sense, *DESERVE* grace, and purchase the application of it to themselves.† Thus, a religion prevailed, which accommodated all sorts of sinners. Those of a more decent cast were taught to expect the Divine favour by their own works, which deserved grace of congruity; and the most scandalous transgressors, by the doctrine of commutation for offences, might still obtain forgiveness: the exercise of munificence towards the hierarchy was sure to cover all crimes; but the humble and the contrite alone, who felt what sin is, and sighed for a remedy, found no relief to consciences, which could not admit the delusive refreshments provided by the papacy. These, either mourned in secret, and poured out their souls to that God, who says to his creatures, "Seek and ye shall find," or if they united themselves in a body of faithful people, maintained the character of those "of whom the world was not worthy," and suffered the extremities of persecution, under the name of Waldenses.

The Scripture in all this time was neglected: the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue was in a great measure lost; and, as if the prince of darkness, through the medium of ignorance and superstition, had not sufficiently blinded the minds of men in religious concerns, even the learning itself, which was reviving, became a powerful instrument of augmenting the general obscurity. For the schoolmen, admitting no first principles, reasoned or argued on every subject, and thus involved every religious notion in sceptical intricacy. The word of God was not appealed

* Collier, vol. i.

† The doctrine of grace of congruity appears to be, "If men by the light of nature, and their own good-will, do their best, it makes them fit to receive and impart supernatural grace; and though this previous work cannot of itself merit eternal life, yet *it merits grace*, which will enable us to perform such works."—ED.

to, but Aristotle and the fathers were considered as decisive.*

That sophistical kind of learning, which Roger Bacon censured, was thriving throughout all this period. And in 1252 the college of divines at Paris, called Sorbonne, was erected by Robert De Sorbonne, a particular friend of Lewis IX.†

With what difficulties men, who truly feared God in Europe at that day, had to grapple in working out their salvation, is abundantly evident from this review. Not even nobility of rank could secure such persons from the horrors of persecution. Some noblemen in Alsace had dared to reprehend the conduct of Innocent III., particularly his imposition of celibacy on the clergy. The bishops of that country had influence enough to oppress those who did so; and, in one day, they committed to the flames a hundred of them or their associates. Individuals, however, there doubtless were, who, having no opportunity of Christian fellowship, worshipped God in secret, and found that UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE WHICH TEACHETH ALL THINGS.‡

Of the Eastern Churches scarcely any thing worthy of relation occurs: yet it may be proper to mention, that in the year 1299, Othman, in the East, was proclaimed Sultan, and founded a new Empire. The people afterwards, as well as the Emperor, were called after his name. The mixed multitude of which this people was composed, were the remains of four Sultanies which had for some time subsisted in the neighbourhood of the river Euphrates. Thus, the four angels, which were bound in Euphrates, were loosed, and under the name of TURKS succeeded the Saracens both in the propagation of Mahometanism, and in diffusing the horrors of war.§ Providence had destined them to scourge the people of Europe for their idolatry and flagitiousness; and Europe still repented not. But the Divine prophecies were fulfilled—and “he may run that readeth.”

* Preface to 13 Cent. Magdeburgh.

† Mosheim, 13 Cent. Par. ii. cap. i. sect. iii.

‡ 1 John ii. 20, 27

§ Rev. ix.—Newton, vol. iii. Prophecies, p. 116.

CHAP. VI.

AUTHORS AND EMINENT PERSONS IN THIS CENTURY.

ON the subject of the propagation of the Gospel, scarcely any thing occurs in this age. The godly spirit of missionaries, which had been the glory of the declining Church, was by this time exhausted ; so extensively had the papal corruptions prevailed. The only accession to the Christian name in Europe seems to have been the conversion, as it is called, of the Prussians, Lithuanians, and some adjoining Provinces.

Prussia was one of the last regions of the North which bowed under the yoke of the popedom. The ignorance, brutality, and ferocity of the inhabitants, were uncommonly great. The Teutonic knights, after they had lost their possessions in Palestine, took the cross against the Prussians, and, after a long and bloody war, forced them to receive the name of Christ ; but I know no evidences of piety, either in the missionaries or in the proselytes. The destruction, however, of the old idolatry, and the introduction of something of Christianity, would eventually, at least, prove a blessing to this people.

Arsenius, bishop of Constantinople, will deserve a place in these memoirs. After that Constantinople was taken by the French and Venetians, the seat of the Greek empire had been transferred to Nice, in Bithynia, of which metropolis, under the reign of Theodorus Lascaris, Arsenius was appointed bishop. He was renowned for piety and simplicity, and had lived a monastic life near Apollonia. Theodorus, a little before his death, constituted him one of the guardians of his son John, an infant in the sixth year of his age. But the integrity and virtue of the bishop were no security against the ambition and perfidy of the times. Michael Palæologus usurped the sovereignty ; and Arsenius at length, with reluctance, overpowered by the influence of the nobility, consented to place the diadem on his head, with this express condition, that he should resign the empire to the royal infant when he should come to maturity.

Arsenius, after he had made this concession, had the mortification to find his pupil treated with perfect disregard ; and, probably, repenting of what he had done, he

retired from his see to a monastery. Some time after by a sudden revolution, Palæologus recovered Constantinople from the Latins; but amidst all his successes, he found it necessary to his reputation to recall the bishop, and he fixed him in the metropolitan see. So great was the ascendancy of the character of a virtuous prelate over the politics of an unprincipled usurper, though covered with secular glory! Palæologus, however, still dreaded the youth, whom he had so deeply injured, and to prevent him from recovering the throne, he had recourse to the barbarous policy of putting out his eyes. Arsenius hearing this, excommunicated the emperor, who then made some pretences of repentance. But the bishop refused to admit him into the church; and Palæologus had the baseness to accuse him of certain crimes before an assembly of priests. Arsenius was convened before the venal assembly, condemned, and banished to a small island of the Propontis. But, conscious of his integrity, he bore his sufferings with serenity and composure; and, requesting that an account might be taken of the treasures of the church, he showed that three pieces of gold, which he had earned by transcribing Psalms, were the whole of his property. This same emperor, who had the meanness, by false accusation, to expel Arsenius, still confessed how much wickedness stands in awe of virtue, by soliciting him to repeal his ecclesiastical censures. The deprived prelate, however, who never had been fond of sacerdotal dignity, remained content with his obscurity, and, to his last breath, refused the request of the usurper, who still retained the wages of his iniquity.*

Gibbon relates this story with no material variation from the account which I have given. But, in his usual manner, he ridicules and scoffs at the virtuous patriarch, and ascribes his profession of disinterestedness to sullenness and vain-glory. How must an ecclesiastic conduct himself, in order to procure the approbation of such historians? If the Christian hero before us (for he seems to have truly feared God) had flattered and gratified the usurper in all his desires and demands, we should then have heard of his hypocrisy and ambition. Now that he voluntarily descends from a state of grandeur, to poverty, disgrace, and exile, for the sake of a good conscience, he must be suspected of sullenness and pride. But by their

* Cent. Madg. 461. Nicephones.

fruits men are to be known; and, by them, so far as they appear in this case, we may form a judgment of Arsenius, of Palæologus, and of infidels.

We have given an instance of a bishop, in the East, who feared God. Let us now behold a similar instance of uprightness in the West. John Scot, bishop of Dunkeld, died in the year 1202. He was an Englishman, who had been archdeacon of St. Andrew's, and thence was preferred to the see.* He was conspicuous in that corrupt age for pastoral vigilance and a conscientious conduct. The county of Argyle was part of his diocese, and, in that county, the people understood only the Irish tongue. Scot, unwilling to receive emoluments from a people whose souls he could not edify, wrote to Pope Clement III., desiring him to constitute Argyle a separate see, and to confer the bishopric on Evaldus his chaplain, who was well qualified for the purpose, and could speak Irish. "How," says he, "can I give a comfortable account to the Judge of the world at the last day, if I pretend to teach those who cannot understand me? The revenues suffice for two bishops, if we are content with a competency, and are not prodigal of the patrimony of Christ. It is better to lessen the charge, and increase the number of labourers in the Lord's vineyard." His whole request was granted; but the election appears not to have been made till the year 1200. Clement the Third died in 1191. Sentiments such as these would have done honour to the purest ages.

Great Britain furnishes us with a similar instance. Seval, archbishop of York, wrote to pope Alexander IV., against his violent and oppressive conduct, and exhorted him to follow Peter,—to feed, not to devour, the sheep of Christ. The particular occasion of this letter was, that the pope had intruded a person named Jordan into the deanery of York.† The opposition of Seval enraged the pope, who, on some pretence, excommunicated him; he still however persisted, and withstood the intrusion of unworthy clergymen. The Romanists harassed him with their utmost malevolence; but he was honoured by the people. He died in 1258, in the fourth year of his archbishopric, of which he seems to have kept possession till his decease.

William de St. Amour, doctor of the Sorbonne, was a

* Collier, vol. i. p. 411.

† Cent. Magd. xiii. p. 550.

professor of divinity in the university of Paris. He had his name from St. Amour in Franche Compté, the place of his nativity. The mendicant orders seldom met with a more vigorous and able adversary. The Dominicans in particular seemed desirous to engross all the power and influence of the university to themselves, while the doctors, resisting their unjust encroachments, excluded them from their society. In the year 1255, the debate was brought before pope Alexander IV., who, with intolerable arrogance, ordered the university not only to restore the Dominicans to their former station, but also to grant them as many professorships as they should require.* Thus the friars not only intruded themselves into the dioceses and churches of the bishops and clergy, and, by the sale of indulgences and a variety of scandalous exactions, perverted whatever of good order and discipline remained in the Church, but also began to domineer over the seminaries of learning. And in all this, as the pope was the principal leader, a despotism of the very worst nature was growing stronger and stronger in Christendom. The doctors of the university of Paris now loudly joined in the cry of the secular clergy against the invasions of the mendicants; and indeed the papal power at this time ruled with absolute dominion. No pastor of a church could maintain any due authority over the laity, if a Franciscan or Dominican appeared in his parish to sell indulgences, and to receive confessions; and the most learned body of men at that time in Europe were now subject to the government of those agents of the popedom. The magistrates of Paris, at first, were disposed to protect the university: but the terror of the papal edicts reduced them at length to silence; and not only the Dominicans, but also the Franciscans, assumed whatever power they pleased in that famous seminary, and knew no other restrictions, except what the Roman tyrant imposed upon them.

St. Amour wrote several treatises against the mendicant orders, and particularly a book published in the year 1255, concerning the perils of the latter days. Persuaded as he was that St. Paul's prophecy of the latter times† was fulfilling in the abominations of the friars, he laid down

* In this brief account of St. Amour, I have endeavoured to give the substance of the information contained in the Centuriators, in Du Pin, Mosheim, and Fox the martyrologist.

† 2 Tim. iii. 1.

thirty-nine marks of false teachers. He might have reduced them to a much smaller number; for, unavoidably, many of his marks will involve and imply one another.

A few years before the unrighteous decision of the pope in favour of the friars, a fanatical book, under the title of "Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel," was published by a Franciscan, which, by exalting Francis above Jesus Christ, and arrogating to his order the glory of reforming mankind by a new Gospel substituted in the room of that of Christ, attempted to exalt that mendicant tribe to the height of divine estimation in the eyes of mankind. The universal ferment excited by this impious book, obliged Alexander IV. to suppress it in the year 1255, and he ordered it to be burnt in secret, willing to spare the reputation of the mendicants. But the university of Paris, which, in the same year, received that grievous injury from the pontiff, which has been mentioned, insisted upon a public condemnation of the book, and Alexander, mighty as he was in power, was constrained, for once, to give way to the feelings of mankind; and he publicly committed the Franciscan's performance to the flames. The next year, however, he revenged himself on St. Amour, by ordering his book on the Perils of the Latter Days, to be also committed to the flames, and by banishing him out of France. The persecuted champion retired into Franche Compté, the place of his birth; but, under the pontificate of Clement IV., he returned to the metropolis, wrote against the abuses of popery with persevering ardour, and died esteemed and regretted by all in the Roman church who retained any regard for Christian truth and piety.

Francis of Assisium, founder of the Minor Friars, was doubtless an extraordinary character. He was born at Assisium, in the ecclesiastical state, and was disinherited by his father, who was disgusted at his enthusiasm. In 1209,* he founded his order, which was but too successful in the world. His practices of devotion were monstrous, and he seems ever to have been the prey of a whimsical imagination. Pride and deceit are not uncommonly connected with a temper like his, and he gave a memorable instance of both. It is certain that he was impressed with five wounds on his body, resembling the wounds of Christ crucified. It is certain also, that he pretended to have

* Alban Butler.

received the impression as a miraculous favour from heaven. To describe the particulars of such a story would be unworthy of an historian of the Church of Christ. Let it suffice to have mentioned in general what is authentic, whence the reader may form some notion of the truth of St. Paul's prediction, concerning the man whose coming was to be after the working of Satan with lying wonders.* The papacy indeed was full of such figments at this time. Francis sought for glory among men by his follies and absurdities, and he found the genius of the age so adapted to his own, that he gained immense admiration and applause. He died in 1226, in the forty-fifth year of his age.† Posterity saw his order splendid in secular greatness, though under the mask of poverty; and we have already referred to the dreams of one of his disciples, who was no mean imitator of his master.‡ The serious and intelligent follower of Jesus will not be staggered at such disgusting counterfeits of Christian virtue. He will recognise in them the hand of Satan deluding, with fictitious holiness, men who had despised that holiness which was genuine. And thus they, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, were justly given over to diabolical infatuations.§ Nothing has happened but according to scriptural revelation; and the duty of humbly and seriously attending to the divine oracles, as our true wisdom and felicity, is made evident.

Let us dwell a moment on his contemporary, Dominic, the founder of the Dominicans. He was a Spaniard, born in the year 1170. In fictitious miracles and monstrous austerities, he resembled Francis.|| We have seen how he persecuted the Waldenses. Butler observes, that he had no hand in the cruelties of the crusades, and asserts, that he was not connected with the inquisition; though he owns that the project of this court was first formed in a council of Toulouse in 1229, and that in 1233 two Dominican friars were the first inquisitors. Let us exercise as much candour as possible on a subject which is controverted, and admit with a learned historian,¶ that Dominic was an inquisitor, but not in the

* 2 Thess. ii. 9. † Alban Butler, vol. x. Cave, vol. i. p. 704.

‡ Viz. The author of "Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel." See the bottom of page 14.

§ 2 Thess. ii.

|| Butler, vol. viii.

¶ Mosheim, vol. i. p. 698.

modern and most offensive sense of the word. Let it be remembered, however, that equal candour is due to the Waldenses, whom the learned Roman Catholic, to whose industry I am repeatedly obliged, falsely describes, from Le Gendres history of France, as a combination of shocking banditti, and whom he accuses of holding the unlawfulness of oaths, and of putting men to death. These charges are sufficiently confuted by what we find set forth in their own writings. The biographer, who found it so very easy to acquit Dominic, should not have condemned the Waldenses on such erroneous information!

Butler also commends the piety of Simon Montfort, the persecutor of the Albigenses, and the father of the famous malcontent, earl of Leicester, who flourished in the reign of king Henry III. ! And though he condemns the barbarities of the crusades, he falsely represents the Waldenses as the enemies of public peace and the laws of civil society! In this the learned author speaks against the concurrent testimony of the princes under whom they lived, and who owned them to be the best of subjects.

To return to Dominic. He seems to have shown no one evidence of genuine humility, or of evangelical piety. In religious pride he lived; and, it is to be feared, he died in the same temper, and in the greatest ignorance; for in his last hours he promised his brethren, that he would never forget them when he was gone to God. If persons, who inquire into the nature of true religion, examined with more precision the true marks of pride on the one hand, and of humility on the other, they would not be so easily imposed on by false pretensions.

This same Dominic constituted the Rosary, or the Psalter of the Virgin Mary. To illustrate this subject, which, though egregiously trifling in its own nature, deserves a few moments' consideration, as tending to give a just view of the religious taste then in fashion, it is to be observed, that the old Anchorets counted the number of their prayers by grains, or similar marks.* Those who could not read, nor recite the Psalter by heart, supplied that deficiency by repeating the Lord's prayer. And thus illiterate persons, at canonical hours, performed devotions corresponding to those of the Psalter recited by the clergy and others; and they were taught, no doubt, that their

* Butler, vol. x.

simple performances would be equally meritorious with the religious exercises of the more learned. On these principles Pater-nosters were counted by the studs of the belts; and Peter the hermit, famous for promoting the first crusades, instructed the illiterate laity to say a number of Pater-nosters and Ave Mary's in lieu of each canonical hour of the church offices. And thus, I imagine, he attempted to qualify his enthusiastic crusaders for the kingdom of heaven. But to Dominic the glory of completing the scheme of MECHANICAL devotion belongs. He directed men to recite fifteen decads of Hail Mary, &c., and one Pater-noster before each decad. Thus men were taught to repeat a hundred and fifty times the angel's salutation of the Virgin, interlarded with a number of Pater-nosters, and to believe that this practice would be as acceptable to God, and as beneficial to themselves, as the recital of the hundred and fifty psalms. I suppose very zealous devotees would go through all this work at one time: perhaps others, less laborious, might perform it at successive intervals.—But is this the spirit of GRACE AND SUPPLICATIONS* promised to the Christian Church? Is this the spirit of adoption, whereby men cry Abba, Father? What is it but the spirit of bondage and miserable superstition, the religion of the lips, a self-righteous drudgery of so much devotional work, with a view to PURCHASE the remission of sins, and to ease the consciences of men, who lived without either understanding the doctrines, or practising the precepts of Scripture? We may observe hence, with how much propriety the Waldenses taught men the true nature of prayer; and what a dreadful vacuum of all true piety was now the portion of nominal Christians, who had departed from the grace of Christ Jesus!

So powerful, however, is the genuine operation of the Divine Spirit, that it can purify a humble soul by faith in Christ, and exhibit a brief assemblage of Christian virtues, even in the gulf of superstition. This seems to have been the case with a great personage of this century, whose character deserves illustration. This was Louis IX., commonly called St. Lewis, the son of Lewis VIII., who invaded England in the reign of King John. His mother Blanche brought him up with religious care.† “I love you, my son,” said she, “with all the tenderness of which

* Zech. xii. 10.

† Alban Butler, vol. viii.

a mother is capable; but I would infinitely rather see you fall dead at my feet, than that you should commit a mortal sin." Lewis felt the daily impression of this thought on his mind. In his minority, Blanche completed the reduction of the Albigenes, a dreadful work, which has already engaged our painful attention. How far Blanche herself might be imposed on by the slanders so copiously poured on the supposed heretics, it is not easy to say. As to Lewis, however, a minor, it may fairly be presumed that he understood not the merits of the cause. As he grew up, his devotional spirit appeared strong and fervent; he often invited men of a religious character to his table; and, when some objected to him, that he spent too much time at his devotions, he answered, "If that time were spent in hunting and gaming, I should not be so rigorously called to account for the employment of my vacant hours." He lived a life of self-denial: he banished from the court all diversions prejudicial to morals. No man, who broke the rules of decorum in conversation, could find admission into his presence. He frequently retired for the purpose of secret prayer. So comprehensive were the powers of his understanding, and so well qualified was he to excel in a variety of employments, that he, personally, administered justice to his subjects with the greatest attention and impartiality. The effect was long remembered after his decease; and those who were dissatisfied with the judicial processes of their own times, with a sigh expressed their wish that justice might be administered as in the days of St. Lewis. Those, who were guilty of blasphemy, were, by his own order, marked on the lips, some say on the forehead, with a hot iron. A rich citizen of Paris was punished in this manner; and Lewis silenced the complaints of those who murmured at his severity, by observing, that he would rather suffer punishment himself, than omit to inflict it on transgressors.

Uprightness and integrity have seldom more strongly marked the character of any prince than they did that of Lewis. He suffered not the nobles to oppress their vassals; and the exercise of sovereign power was in his hands a blessing to mankind. A nobleman had hanged three children for hunting rabbits: Lewis having investigated the fact, condemned him to capital punishment: a rare instance of the love of justice breaking through the

forms of aristocratical oppression, which, at that time, domineered through Europe! It was not to be supposed that the feudal lords would, without emotion, hear of a sentence so seldom pronounced on an offender of such rank. They earnestly interceded for the nobleman's life; and Lewis was so far prevailed on by the maxims of the times as to mitigate the penalty. He, however, deprived the cruel oppressor of the greatest part of his estate.

Truth and sincerity seem to have pervaded the soul of Lewis. In all treaties and negotiations he was conscientiously exact; and foreign states frequently referred matters of dispute to his arbitration.

With great pleasure I dwell a little on a character so excellent. I confess, the superstition of the times had deeply tintured Lewis; and it is to be regretted, that his eminent station gave him not that access to the Protestants of his own dominions, who, in those days, adorned the real Gospel of Christ, which might, under God, have emancipated his soul from papal bondage, and enabled him to shine with a salutary light among the very best of Christian princes.

The weak and distracted government of our king, Henry III., gave to Lewis frequent occasions of exercising that secular chicane, and that spirit of artful intrigue, in which mere statesmen abound. The English were divided among themselves, and Henry held the balance of power among them with a tremulous hand. But Lewis took no advantage of their divisions, nor attempted to expel them from their provinces, which they still held in France. John, the father of Henry, by a sentence of attainder, seconded by the arms of Philip Augustus, the grandfather of Lewis, had been deprived of Normandy, and some other provinces in France. Lewis had scruples of conscience that affected his mind, in regard to the detention of those provinces, which had fallen to him by way of inheritance. He never interposed in English affairs, but with an intention to compose the differences between the king and his nobility; he recommended every healing measure to both parties; and exerted himself with all his might, to bring to a sense of his duty the earl of Leicester, that same enterprising rebel, who, after a series of splendid crimes, was, at last, defeated and slain by Edward, prince of Wales, the son of king Henry. He made a treaty with England at a time

when the affairs of the kingdom were at the lowest ebb: but took less advantage than he might have done of his own superior situation in the terms of the treaty. He made some concessions: he ensured to Henry the peaceable possession of Guienne; but required him to cede Normandy, and some other provinces. Afterwards, when by a rare instance of confidence, the king of England and his barons agreed to refer the settlement of their differences to Lewis, that equitable monarch decided in a manner which showed his regard both to the prerogatives of the crown and the rights of the people.

The spirit of the crusades was adapted to the superstitious habits of Lewis, and he fell into the snare. From this quarter he, who, in other respects, was the father and friend of his people, was unhappily led into a conduct prejudicial to society. Having been brought to the brink of the grave by an illness in 1244, when he was beginning to recover he took the vow of the cross; and as soon as he was able, raised an army and made an expedition into the Holy Land. Before his departure, he made large restitution for injuries inadvertently committed throughout the kingdom; he took the most exact care of the morals of his soldiers, so far as he had opportunity and ability; and, in the whole course of his military measures, avoided the unnecessary effusion of blood, by saving the life of every infidel whom he could take prisoner. It is a deplorable instance of the power of the "god of this world"* over our fallen race, that a monarch of so much good sense, and of so great virtue and piety, could yet be engaged in a cause so imprudent and chimerical. Good men, however, will act a consistent part even where they are evidently mistaken in their object. Lewis was still the same man; and the fear of God was his predominant principle of action. Let civil history relate his military prowess, the efforts of his valour, and the series of his calamities. When he was taken prisoner by the Saracens, and was menaced with death, he behaved with his usual fortitude, and concern for his soldiers. At length, being ransomed, he visited Palestine. Hearing of the death of his mother, Blanche, he discovered much filial tenderness on the occasion. As he returned to Europe after a disastrous expedition, three sermons were preached every week on board his ship; and the sailors

* 2 Cor. iv. 4

and soldiers were catechized and instructed, Lewis bearing a part in all the religious offices. He returned to Paris after an absence of almost six years. Here he was visited by our Henry III., to whom he said, "I think myself more happy that God hath given me patience in suffering, than if I had conquered the world." We are told, that many Saracens, induced by his piety, received Christian baptism; and that he sent two monks to preach to the Tartars:—but the vices of nominal Christians were so flagrant as to defeat all these good intentions.

Devoted as Lewis was to the popedom, he could not but see the enormous ecclesiastical abuses which at that time prevailed. He, therefore, made laws against papal encroachments, and against simony; and prohibited the rapines of the Romish pontiff by an edict, in which he expresses himself to this effect; "The exactions and heavy impositions of money imposed on our kingdom by the court of Rome, through which our territories are miserably impoverished, we will not suffer to be collected."* Words were no empty sounds with a prince of his steadiness and fortitude; and, by the vigour and wisdom of his administration, France seems to have been much exempted from that intolerable oppression of the Roman tyrant, under which England at that time groaned. But Lewis undertook a second crusade, laid siege to Tunis on the coast of Africa, and died before that city. On the approach of death, he gave very salutary advice to Philip his eldest son. "Avoid wars," says he, "with Christians, and spare the innocent subjects of your enemy. Discountenance blasphemy, games of chance, drunkenness, and impurity. Lay no heavy burdens on your subjects. I pray our Lord Jesus Christ to strengthen you in his service, and always to increase his grace in you; and I beg that we may together see, praise, and honour him to eternity. Suffer patiently; being persuaded that you deserve much more punishment for your sins; and then tribulation will be your gain. Love and converse with the godly: banish the vicious from your company: delight to hear profitable sermons: wherever you are, permit none, in your presence, to deal in slanderous or indecent conversation. Hear the poor with patience: and where your

* Cent. Magd. xiii. 329.

Edward III. and other princes were also compelled, by the rapacity of the popedom, to issue similar edicts.—Ed.

own interest is concerned, stand for your adversary against yourself, till the truth appear." As Lewis grew more feeble, he desired no mention whatever to be made to him of temporal things. He prayed with tears for the conversion of infidels and sinners ; and besought God, that his army might have a safe retreat, lest, through weakness of the flesh, they should deny Christ. He repeated aloud, " Lord, I will enter into thine house ; I will worship in thy holy temple, and give glory to thy name. Into thy hands I commend my spirit." These were his last words ; and he breathed out his soul in the year 1270, aged fifty-five years. In better times, and with evangelical light, what might not have been expected from such a character ?

This century saw also a pope of whom it appears right to make some record in this history. Peter Celestine was* born in Apulia, about the year 1215, and lived as a hermit in a little cell. He was admitted into holy orders ; but after that, he lived five years in a cave on Mount Morroni near Sulmoni. He was molested with internal temptations, which his confessor told him were a stratagem of the enemy, that would not hurt him, if he opposed it. He founded a monastery at Mount Morroni, in 1274. The see of Rome having been vacant two years and three months, Celestine was unanimously chosen pope on account of the fame of his sanctity. The archbishop of Lyons,† presenting him with the instrument of his election, conjured him to submit to the vocation. Peter, in astonishment, prostrated himself on the ground ; and, after he had continued in prayer a considerable time, he rose up, and fearing to oppose the will of God, he consented to his election, and took the name of Celestine V.

Since the days of the first Gregory, no pope had ever assumed the pontifical dignity with more purity of intention. But he had not Gregory's talents for business and government ; and the Roman see was become more corrupt in the thirteenth than it was in the sixth century.—Celestine soon became sensible of his incapacity : he was lost, as in a wilderness. He attempted to reform abuses, to retrench the luxury of the clergy ; to do, in short, what he found totally impracticable. He committed mistakes and exposed himself to the ridicule of the scornful. His conscience was kept on the rack through a variety of scruples, from which he could not extricate

* Butler, vol. v.

† Vertot's Knights of Malta, vol. ii.

himself; and, from his ignorance of the world, and of canon law, he began to think he had done wrong in accepting the office. He spent much of his time in retirement: nor was he easy there, because his conscience told him, that he ought to be discharging his office. Overcome with anxiety, he asked cardinal Cajetan, whether he might not abdicate? It was answered, yes. Celestine gladly embraced the opportunity of assuming again the character of brother Peter, after he had been distressed with the phantom of dignity for four or five months. He abdicated in 1294. The last act of his pontificate was worthy of the sincerity of his character. He made a constitution, that the pontiff might be allowed to abdicate, if he pleased.*—It is remarkable that no pope, since that time, has taken the benefit of this constitution!

That same Cajetan, who had, in effect, encouraged his resignation, contrived to be elected his successor, and took the name of Boniface VIII. Though Peter had given the most undoubted proofs of his love of obscurity, and desired nothing more than that he might spend the rest of his days in private devotion, yet Boniface, who measured other men by himself, apprehended and imprisoned him, lest he should revoke his resignation. Peter gave such proofs of sincerity as convinced all persons, except Boniface himself, that nothing was to be dreaded from his ambition. The tyrant sent him into the castle of Fumone, under a guard of soldiers: the old hermit was shut up in a hideous dungeon; and his rest was interrupted by the gaolers, who nightly disturbed his sleep. These insults and hardships he seems to have borne with Christian patience and meekness. He sent this message to Boniface, “I am content; I desired a cell, and a cell you have given me.” But AMBITION IS MADE OF STERNER STUFF than to yield to the suggestions of conscience or humanity. In the year 1296, after an imprisonment of ten months, Celestine died of a fever, most probably contracted by the unworthy treatment which he received.

I have now mentioned the principal facts recorded concerning Celestine. There are no memorials of the internal exercises of his mind, but the reader will hope that he may be ranked with those of whom “the world was not worthy.”† After his decease the hypocritical Boniface, and all the cardinals, attended his obsequies a.

* Platina.

† Heb. xi. 38.

St. Peter's. This is that Boniface, whose crimes disgraced the end of this century, and the beginning of the next: of whom it is said, that he entered the pontificate as a fox, lived as a lion, and died as a dog; and who, having tormented the Christian world for eight years, met, at length, with a punishment, worthy of his crimes, dying in prison under the greatest agonies. This same man also published a decretal, "that the Roman pontiff ought to be judged by none, though, by his conduct, he drew innumerable souls with himself to hell!"

Thomas Aquinas, called "the angelical doctor," filled the Christian world in this century with the renown of his name. He was a Dominican, who, by his comments on four books of Peter Lombard, called the master of the sentences, and, particularly, by his expositions of Aristotle, made himself more famous than most men of that time, on account of his skill in scholastic divinity. His penetration and genius were of the first order; but he excelled in that subtle and abstruse kind of learning only, which was better calculated to strike the imagination, than to improve the understanding. He maintained what is commonly called the doctrine of Freewill, though he largely quoted Augustine, and retailed many of his pious and devotional sentiments. His subtle arguments enabled him to give a specious colour to the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, which in him found a vehement defender. The new festival of the body of Christ was, by this divine, adorned with an idolatrous ritual, which strengthened the fashionable superstitions.* He was the great supporter of the doctrine of supererogation, which, at the same time that it established the most pernicious views of self-righteousness, by leaving the disposal of the superfluous treasure of the merits of saints to the discretion of the papal see, added one strong link to the chain, which dragged the nations into ecclesiastical slavery. Nor were his voluminous writings much calculated to instruct mankind. For he supposed, that whatever sense any passage of Scripture could possibly admit in grammatical construction, it was the real sense intended

* I have consulted the Centuriators, Mosheim, Du Pin, and Butler, concerning the tenets and writings of this doctor, and, on the whole, can find but little matter which may properly belong to this history.—A similar observation may be made concerning Bonaventura.

by the Holy Spirit: whence the imaginations of every sportive genius were regarded as of divine authority. And thus the Scriptures were perverted and exposed to the ridicule of profane minds. Nor were they rescued from this miserable abuse till the era of the Reformation. His sentiments on the all-important doctrine of justification were deplorably corrupt; and that “good works deserve grace of congruity,” was one of his favourite axioms. His notions of the nature of repentance were egregiously trifling.

Bonaventura, a Franciscan doctor, may be briefly dismissed with similar observations. He also held the same corrupt sentiments concerning justification with Thomas Aquinas. Nor does there appear in the whole Roman Church, in this century, a single divine who could give to a serious inquirer the scriptural answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”* Hence all, who felt trouble of conscience, were led to betake themselves to salvos with which the blind leaders of the blind supplied them.—Among these, the delusive invention of PURGATORY was the most remarkable; and in the Romish Church it upholds its credit to this day. Before the true scripture doctrine of justification it cannot stand for a moment; and whoever applies this doctrine with unfeigned faith to a guilty conscience, such a one will find relief, and will be led into the paths of true peace and genuine holiness. He may indeed, and ought, to pity those who are deluded by so unscriptural and superstitious a notion as that of purgatory, but he himself will never be led captive by it. It may be worth while to state the reasons on which the advocates of the papacy support the doctrine of purgatory, in their own words. “Some part of the debt which the penitent owes to the divine justice, may remain uncanceled. Certainly some sins are venial, which deserve not eternal death; yet, if not effaced by condign penance in this world, they must be punished in the next. The smallest sin excludes a soul from heaven, so long as it is not blotted out. But no man will say, that a venial sin which destroys not sanctifying grace, will be punished with eternal torments. Hence there must be a relaxation of punishment in the world to come. Venial sins of surprise are readily effaced by penance, as we hope, through the divine mercy. Venial sins of malice,

* Acts, xvi. 30, 31.

or those committed with full deliberation, are of a different nature, far more grievous and fatal. They are usually sins of habit, and lead even to mortal sin!"*

Thus, by the help of certain distinctions of sins, conclusions NO WHERE WARRANTED IN SCRIPTURE were drawn, and mankind were led to look on purgatory as a relief to troubled consciences. If they had not effaced their guilt by penance in this life, it was hoped that purgatory, assisted by the prayers and donations made in behalf of the deceased, would release them afterwards from damnation! How strongly men were hence encouraged to live in sin all their days, is but too plain. And it seems wonderful, that so learned and sensible an author as is just quoted should build a doctrine of such practical importance on mere conjectures, without the least scriptural ground. But on the other hand, whoever sees the real guilt and defilement of sin, of all sorts of sin, and rests wholly and entirely for acceptance with God on the righteousness, atonement, and intercession of Jesus Christ, finds at once the power of superstition and of licentiousness subdued; and he knows how to possess his soul IN PERFECT PEACE; and to serve his heavenly Father "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of his life."† The instruction, which lays open this secret, is given by every real Protestant teacher of divinity;—instruction, which, we see, the two great admired doctors and supposed luminaries of the thirteenth century were unable to give.

It is much to be wished that we could learn more of Hugo the Burgundian, a Roman cardinal, who wrote comments on the whole Scriptures, and honestly exposed the impiety and wickedness of the ecclesiastics of his time. He is said to have been the inventor of concordances. He died at Rome in the year 1262.‡

Guilhelmus,§ bishop of Paris, flourished about the year 1230. On Christian justification, and other fundamentals, he thought more justly than many of his contemporaries. He wrote on various religious subjects, and particularly on the collation of benefices; on which point he held, that no man could be a pluralist, without the loss of his soul,

* Butler, vol. xi. p. 27.

† Luke, i. 74, 75.

‡ *Ladvocat*.—Cent. Magd. x. 1020. The division of the Bible into chapters as now used is ascribed to cardinal Hugo.

§ Cent. Magd. x. 1033.

unless the value of his preferments was exceedingly small. He was a man of learning and piety.

On this question the care of the Church had been remarkable. In the fourth general council of Chalcedon, by the tenth canon, pluralities were condemned: also at the second council of Nice, in the eighth century. In the sixth council of Paris, held in the year 829, the same practice was pronounced unlawful. And so strongly did the voice of natural conscience, and the common sense of propriety and decorum prevail against the torrent of fashionable corruptions, in speculation at least, that even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the possession of scandalous pluralities was condemned in a papal council, namely, the fourth council of the Lateran.*

Christianus, bishop of Mentz, was accused before the pope, as a person incapable of governing the Church. For he had refused to be concerned in military and secular employments, and had given himself up to the pastoral care. In these times such a conduct was deemed contemptible at least, if not criminal; after two years, residence at Mentz, he resigned; and, not long after, he died in the year 1251.†

CHAP. VII.

GROSSETESTE, BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

ROBERT GROSSETESTE‡ was born probably about the year 1175; he seems to have been a person of obscure

* See Burnet's Pastoral Care, chap. v. and Labb. Concil. Lat. iv.

N. B. Our historian, in the concise notice which he takes of this council, does not mention the dispensing power given to the pope by the twenty-ninth canon. But this can scarcely be deemed a blamable omission by any one who observes, that the dispensing power of the pope under the arrogant form of *NON OBSTANTE*, is strongly reprobated in three distinct places of this volume, and these at no great distance from this very page, viz. pp. 35, 36.

The twenty-ninth canon concludes in these words, "*Circa SUBLIMES, tamen et LITERATAS personas, quæ majoribus sunt beneficiis honorandæ, cum ratio postulaverit, per sedem apostolicam, poterit dispensari.*" Respecting elevated and literary characters who are honoured with the larger benefices, it may be allowed to give dispensations by the apostolical seat when reason requires. The words "*sublimes*" and "*litteratas*" were soon understood to include all persons in any way dependent on great men, and all graduates in any university, provided they could afford to go to Rome and pay for their dispensations.—Labb. xi. p. 181.

† Cent. Magd. x. 1052.

‡ I am obliged principally to Mr. Pegge's valuable publication of

parentage, at Stradbrook in Suffolk. He studied at Oxford, where learning was very zealously cultivated; and there he laid the foundation of his skill in the Greek tongue, the knowledge of which had been introduced from France and Italy. Hence he made himself master of Aristotle, whose works, though idolized, had hitherto been only read through the medium of translation; and at Oxford also he studied the sacred language of the Old Testament. He afterwards went to Paris, the most renowned seminary then in Europe, where he still prosecuted the study of the Hebrew and the Greek, and became a perfect master of the French language. Here also he became, according to the ideas of the age, a consummate theologian and philosopher. Knowledge was then very rude and inaccurate: but Grosseteste, doubtless, possessed all which Europe could furnish. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that he should have been looked on as a magician; the same thing happened to the famous Roger Bacon, who flourished somewhat later.

Grosseteste was a divine of principal note in the University of Oxford. He associated with both the mendicant orders, and was the first lecturer in the Franciscan school of that seminary. He seems to have been always serious in religion, according to the degree of light which he had: and, as his views were indistinct, it is not surprising that he was, for a time at least, captivated by the appearance of sanctity in those deceivers of mankind.

In the year 1235, he was elected, by the dean and chapter, bishop of Lincoln; and king Henry III. confirmed their choice. That see was then much more extensive than it is at this day: and the new bishop, who was of an ardent and active spirit, immediately undertook to reform abuses. For this end he went through the several archdeaconries and deaneries, requiring the attendance of the clergy, and admonishing the people likewise to attend, that their children might be confirmed, that they might make their confession, and hear the word of God. Robert himself usually preached to the clergy; and some friar of the Dominican or Franciscan order lectured the people. The friars of these orders were now his particular favourites; and he encouraged them to hear the

the life of this distinguished prelate, for the following account: but I have also consulted Fox the martyrologist, Fascic. rer. expetend., and other authors.

confessions of the laity, and to enjoin them penance. The secular clergy were naturally enough offended at this predilection of the bishop: they thought that their own rights were invaded. In the mean time the friars themselves gradually brought the new orders into disrepute, by exercising an unlimited dominion over the consciences of the laity, and by enriching themselves at their expense. But Robert, who measured the minds of others by his own honesty and simplicity, and who was pleased with the superior learning, zeal, and activity of these new instruments of the papacy, saw not as yet the evil tendency of their measures and therefore he encouraged their labours. The days were evil; the zealous bishop could not think of giving countenance to the secular clergy, who were ignorant and vicious, in preference to the friars; and, in his zeal for promoting godliness, of which his notions were confused and undigested, he was glad of those assistants, who seemed most cheerfully to co-operate with his own benevolent intentions.

But though he was far more disposed to favour the two new orders than they deserved, he was severe in his censures of the other more ancient orders, and was very strict in his visitations of them. In both parts of his conduct he was influenced by the same upright principle: the hypocrisy indeed of the Dominicans and Franciscans escaped his penetration; but he could not be deceived by the gross ignorance and dissolute manners of the more ancient orders. Such were the methods by which the prince of darkness seems to have prolonged the reign of Antichrist. The orders of ancient times, having filled up their season in supporting the MAN OF SIN by a specious appearance of holiness, when this was gone, other orders arose, which undertook the same task, and defended the system of iniquity by a severer course of life and manners. Even such men as the bishop of Lincoln, rigidly conscientious and upright, were seduced, undesignedly, to lend their aid in imposing on mankind. In the mean time, the true cure of these evils, namely, the light of Scripture and of its genuine doctrines, was generally unknown in Christendom.

One of the most salutary offices of the art of criticism is to distinguish the genuine works of the ancients from the spurious. This was unknown in Grosseteste's time: and hence the laborious bishop was induced to employ his

learning in translating "the Testaments of the twelve Patriarchs" out of Greek into Latin. He thought that he had, by this means, enriched Europe with a valuable monument of sacred antiquity. It is amazing that the bishop should place so contemptible a performance on an equal footing with the holy Scriptures. It scarcely seemed worth while to mention such a circumstance, except as a demonstration that the ignorance of the times was exceedingly great, and that the difficulties of acquiring religious knowledge were then great beyond our conception.

Let it suffice to mention in general, that Grosseteste was, partly through his love of justice, and partly through the excessive warmth of his temper, frequently engaged in quarrels with convents, and with other agents of the pope. At one time he was excommunicated by the convent of Canterbury: but this ecclesiastical sentence was so frequently prostituted to the basest purposes, and was so often pronounced on frivolous occasions, that it had, in a great measure, lost its influence on the minds of men. Grosseteste treated it, in his own case, with scorn and contempt, and continued to labour in the promotion of piety, and in the redress of abuses, with unwearied vigour and activity, but, at the same time, under all the disadvantages, which the darkness of the times and an eager and vehement temper may be supposed to occasion. So long a course of consistent steadiness, and integrity, and so much fear of God, attended with so small a degree of spiritual light, as in the case of Grosseteste, is not a common phenomenon in the Church of God. But the work of the Holy Spirit in religion is diversified with an endless variety of operations. The instance before us deserves attention. Grosseteste was favoured with so much discernment, as not to endure with patience the manifold corruptions of the times. He took pains in his diocese to reform various gross abuses, among which was the practice of clergymen acting plays, and maintaining connection with Jews. The friars were still his favourites: and he rebuked the rectors and vicars of his diocese, because they neglected to hear them preach, and because they discouraged the people from attending and confessing to them. His devoted attachment to the popedom appears hence in a striking light, and still more so in some other transactions, which it is not necessary to particularize. He continued to patronise the friars. These

were his most intimate companions : with them he used to hold conferences on the Scriptures ; and at one time he had thoughts of entering into the Franciscan order himself. But however defective he was in doctrine, he was exceedingly strict in his views of morality : and, like all reformers of the merely active class, who labour to promote external good conduct, with low and inadequate ideas of Christian principle, he excited great offence and disgust, and produced very little solid benefit to mankind.

Events, however, occurred which, in some measure, unfolded to the eyes of Grosseteste the real character of the friars. In 1247, two English Franciscans were sent into England with credentials to extort money for the pope. They applied to the prelates and abbots, but seem, at this time at least, to have met with little success. Grosseteste was amazed at the insolence and pompous appearance of the friars, who assured him that they had the pope's bull, and who earnestly demanded six thousand marks for the contribution of the diocese of Lincoln : " Friars," answered he, " with all reverence to his holiness be it spoken, the demand is as dishonourable as it is impracticable. The whole body of the clergy and people are concerned in it equally with me. For me then to give a definite answer in an instant to such a demand, before the sense of the kingdom is taken upon it, would be rash and absurd." The native good sense of the bishop suggested this answer : but the true Antichristian character of the pope was as yet unknown to Grosseteste.—The blood of our Saviour was about the same time pretended to be brought into England, and he had the weakness to vindicate the delusion.

Grosseteste continued still to exert himself with the most upright intentions for the good of the Church. But it was his usual infelicity to " labour in the fire for very vanity,"* because he had no distinct perception of the fundamental truths of Christianity. The value of solid and perspicuous views of evangelical truth was never more forcibly exhibited than in this case. Most bishops or pastors, who have been possessed of this advantage, though inferior to Grosseteste in magnanimity, industry, and activity, have yet, of truly pious, far exceeded him in promoting the real good of the Church. He translated

* Habak. ii. 13.

the works of John Damascenus, and of the spurious Dionysius the Areopagite, and illustrated them with commentaries; the former author was learned indeed, but was the great patron of image worship; and the latter was a contemptible visionary!

It was in the case of practical evils, not of doctrinal errors, that Grosseteste showed the strength of his discernment: in regard to these he never failed to act with sincerity and vigour. In 1248, he obtained, at a great expense, from Innocent IV., letters to empower him to reform the religious orders. If he had understood at that time the real character of Antichrist, he would have foreseen the vanity of all attempts to reform the Church, which were grounded on papal authority. The rectitude, however, of his own mind was strikingly apparent in the transaction. He saw with grief the waste of large revenues made by the monastic orders; and being supported by the pope, as he thought, he determined to take into his own hand the rents of the religious houses, most probably with a design to institute and ordain vicarages in his diocese, and to provide for the more general instruction of the people. But the monks appealed to the pope; and Grosseteste, in his old age, was obliged to travel to Lyons, where Innocent resided. Roman venality was now at its height, and the pope determined the cause against the bishop. Grieved and astonished at so unexpected a decision, Grosseteste said to Innocent, "I relied on your letters and promises, but am entirely disappointed." "What is that to you?" answered the pope; "you have done your part, and we are disposed to favour them: is your eye evil, because I am good?" With such shameless effrontery can wicked men trifle with scriptural passages. The bishop, in a low tone, but so as to be heard, said with indignation, "O money, how great is thy power, especially at the court of Rome!" The remark was bold and indignant, but perfectly just. It behoved Innocent to give some answer; and he used the common method of wicked men in such cases, namely, to retort the accusation. "You English," said he, "are always grinding and impoverishing one another. How many religious men, persons of prayer and hospitality, are you striving to depress, that you may sacrifice to your own tyranny and avarice!"—So spake the most unprincipled

of robbers to a bishop, whose unspotted integrity was allowed by all the world.

All that Grosseteste could do was to leave his testimony at the court of Rome; and he delivered three copies of a long sermon, one copy to the pope, the other two copies to two of the cardinals. In this discourse he sharply inveighed against the flagitious practices of the court of Rome, particularly the appropriation of churches to religious houses, the appeals of the religious to the pope, and the scandalous clause* in the bulls of *NON OBSTANTE*, which was the great engine of the pope's dispensing power. He observes, that the Son of God submitted to a most ignominious death for the redemption of human souls, which, without mercy, were delivered to wolves and bears. His uprightness and magnanimity were evidenced by this step, but no good effect appeared. To explain and enforce the doctrines of the Gospel, and to prove the whole structure of the papacy perfectly inconsistent with those doctrines, would have been a far more likely method of promoting the edification of the Church; but to this task the light and knowledge of the bishop were unequal. He was for some time so dejected with the disappointment which he had met with, that he formed intentions of resigning his bishopric. But, recollecting what ravages of the Church might be the consequence of such a step, he felt it his duty to remain in his office, and to do all the good which the times would permit.

Bishop Grosseteste often preached to the people in the course of his perambulation through his diocese; and he required the neighbouring clergy to attend the sermons. He earnestly exhorted them to be laborious in ministering to their flocks: and the lazy Italians, who, by virtue of the pope's letters, had been intruded into opulent benefices, and who neither understood the language of the people, nor wished to instruct them, were the objects of his detestation. He would often, with indignation, cast the papal bulls out of his hands, and absolutely refuse to comply with them, saying, that he should be the friend of Satan, if he should commit the care of souls to foreigners. Pope Innocent, however, persisting in his plan, peremptorily ordered him to admit an Italian, perfectly ignorant

* See an account of the effect of this clause in page 36. See also the note in page 28.

of the English language, to a very rich benefice in the diocese of Lincoln; and Grosseteste, refusing to obey, was suspended. Whether the sentence of suspension was formally repealed or not does not appear. Certain it is, that the bishop continued to exercise his episcopal functions; and shortly we shall advert to facts, which prove in a still more striking manner with what impunity he despised the papal mandates.

Observing that churches appropriated to religious houses had not always stated vicars, and that where vicarages existed, they were often meanly endowed, he obtained at length, in 1250, a bull from Innocent to empower him to regulate these matters. The evil was indeed enormous; but the persevering zeal of the bishop, supported by the extensive influence of his character, prevailed at length, in some degree, over the pope's usurpations; and a considerable number of vicarages in his diocese were at length regulated. A pious and upright perseverance in the reformation of abuses, amidst many vexatious disappointments, is seldom altogether in vain; and this wise and encouraging order of the divine government is extremely worthy of the attention of those who possess authority in the Church in all ages.

Grosseteste united the labours of his pen to those of the episcopal office. He began a comment on the Psalter, though he lived not to finish the work; and he seems to have known no other recreation than what naturally arose from the variety of his religious employments.

In January, 1253, Innocent was desirous of preferring his nephew, an Italian youth, in the cathedral of Lincoln; and for this purpose he, by letter, directed the bishop of the diocese to give him the first canonry that should be vacant. This was to be done by *PROVISION*, as it was called; for that was the decent term employed by the pontiff when he undertook to provide a successor to a benefice beforehand, under pretence of correcting the abuse of long vacancies. Innocent seems to have been determined in this instance to intimidate the bishop into submission. He declared, that any other disposal of the canonry should be null and void; and that he would excommunicate every one who should dare to disobey his injunction. He wrote to two Italians, his agents in England, ordering them to ensure and complete the appointment, with his usual clause of *NON OBSTANTE*; a

clause pregnant with the most intolerable abuses; for it set aside all statutes and customs, and obliged them to give way to the present humour of the pope.*

Grosseteste, resolute in his disobedience, wrote an EPISTLE on this occasion, which will always be remembered. As he advanced in years, he saw more clearly the corruptions of the popedom, which, however, he still looked on as of divine authority; but, excepting this error, he argues altogether on Protestant principles. Some extracts of the epistle may deserve the reader's attention.† “ I am not disobedient to the apostolical precepts.—I am bound by the divine command to obey them. Our Saviour Christ says, Whosoever is not with me, is against me.—Our lord the pope appears to be his type and representative. It is impossible then that the sanctity of the apostolical see can be repugnant to the authority of Jesus Christ. The NON OBSTANTE clause overflows with uncertainty, fraud, and deceit, and strikes at the root of all confidence between man and man. Next to the sin of Antichrist, which shall be in the latter time, nothing can be more contrary to the doctrine of Christ than to destroy men's souls, by defrauding them of the benefit of the pastoral office. Those who serve their own carnal desires by means of the milk and wool of the sheep of Christ, and do not minister the pastoral office to the salvation of the flock, are guilty of destroying souls. Two enormous evils are in this way committed. In one respect they sin directly against God himself, who is essentially good; in another against the image of God in man, which, by the reception of grace, is partaker of the divine nature.—For the holy apostolical see to be accessory to so great wickedness, would be a horrible abuse of the fulness of power, an entire separation from the glorious kingdom of Christ, and a proximity to the two princes of darkness.‡ No man, faithful to the said see, can, with an unspotted conscience, obey such mandates, even if they were seconded by the high order of angels themselves; on the contrary, every faithful Christian ought to oppose them with all his might. It is, therefore, in perfect consistency with my duty of obedience that I withstand these enormities, so

* Fascic. rer. vol. ii. 399.

+ See Fox, vol. i. p. 365, and M. Paris, p. 870. Fascic. rer. vol. ii. 400.

‡ He seems to mean the devil and Antichrist.

abominable to the Lord Jesus Christ, so repugnant to the holiness of the apostolical see, and so contrary to the unity of the Catholic faith. I say then this see cannot act but to edification; but your PROVISIONS are to destruction. The holy see neither can nor ought to attempt any such thing; for flesh and blood, and not the Heavenly Father, have revealed such doctrines."

It is not clear whether this epistle was written to the pope directly, or to some of his agents. It was meant, however, for his inspection; and it affords a marvellous instance of that Christian boldness and honesty for which Grosseteste is so justly renowned.—Sullied, indeed, were the qualities of this good man with much doctrinal error, but ever animated by a zeal for the honour of God, and by a deep sense of the worth of souls.

Innocent, on receiving the positive denial, accompanied with such warm remonstrances, was incensed beyond measure: and "Who," said he, "is this old dotard, who dares to judge my actions? By Peter and Paul, if I were not restrained by my generosity, I would make him an example and a spectacle to all mankind. Is not the king of England my vassal, and my slave? and, if I gave the word, would he not throw him into prison, and load him with infamy and disgrace?" In so low a light did the bishop of Rome behold the monarch of this island! But king John had reduced his kingdom into a state of subjection to the pope; and the same vassalage continued all the days of his successor. The cardinals, however, who saw the danger which the pope incurred by his arrogance and temerity, endeavoured to moderate his resentment. Giles, in particular, a Spanish cardinal, said,* "It is not expedient for you to proceed against the bishop in that violent manner. For what he says is certainly true, nor can we with decency condemn him. He is a holy man, more so than we ourselves are; a man of excellent genius, and of the best morals; no prelate in Christendom is thought to excel him. By this time, it is possible, that the truths expressed in this epistle are divulged among many; and they will stir up numbers against us. The clergy, both of France and England, know the character of the man, nor is it possible to cast any stigma upon him. He is believed to be a great philosopher, an accomplished scholar in Latin and Greek literature, zealous in the

* Fox, vol. 1. p. 366. Pegge, p. 248

administration of justice, a reader of theology in the schools, a popular preacher, a lover of chastity, and an enemy of simony." Others joined with Giles in the same sentiments. On the whole, the cardinals advised the pope to connive at these transactions, lest some tumult might arise in the Church; for they said, it was an evident truth, that a revolt from the Church of Rome would one day take place in Christendom. It seems there were even then some discerning spirits, who could foresee that so unrighteous a domination would in time be brought to a close. Yet the prevalence of ambition and avarice induced them to support that domination, though they were convinced of its iniquity.

But the fury of Innocent was not to be allayed. He pronounced the sentence of excommunication against Grosseteste; and nominated Albert, one of his nuncios, to the bishopric of Lincoln. The bishop appealed to the tribunal of Christ, and paid no regard to the decree. What the cardinals foresaw came to pass; the pope's commands were universally neglected; and Grosseteste continued in quiet possession of his dignity.

In the latter end of the summer of the same year, 1253, he was seized with a mortal disease at his palace at Buckden; and he sent for friar John de St. Giles, to converse with him on the state of the Church. He blamed Giles and his brethren the Dominicans, and also the Franciscans, because, though their orders were founded in voluntary poverty, they did not rebuke the vices of the great. "I am convinced," said he, "that both the pope, unless he amend his errors, and the friars, except they endeavour to restrain him, will be deservedly exposed to everlasting death." We may hence collect what was the foundation of that respect which the bishop was wont to pay to the friars; it was the *éclat* of their voluntary poverty, which he hoped would have enabled them to be faithful dispensers of the word of God, as by it they seemed to be removed above the temptations of avarice. If a man of his understanding was deceived by their feigned sanctity, it ought to be less matter of surprise that the world at large was imposed on by the same cause; and that the institution of these orders proved so convenient a support to the popedom for several generations. The mind of Grosseteste was always more clear in discerning the *END* of true religion than it was in

discovering the MEANS of promoting it. Upright, intrepid, disinterested, and constantly influenced by the fear of God, he yet failed to bring about the good which he had conceived in his heart, because he had too little acquaintance with "the mystery of godliness," and because he too much relied on moral and prudential plans for that reformation of mankind, which is sought in vain from every thing, except from the knowledge and application of the Gospel.

But bishop Grosseteste was rapidly advancing towards eternity; and he seems now to have had more powerful manifestations of divine truth from the Spirit of God, than any with which he had hitherto been favoured. His zeal evidently arose from the purest charity. Superior to selfish considerations, he was absorbed in meditations concerning the Church; and we have from a contemporary historian* an account of his last conversations with his chaplains, in which there was probably something still more evangelical than what they or the historian could understand. It is, however, our duty to report it as it is delivered to us; and ministers at least will find it worthy their attention.

"In October, the bishop, oppressed with a fatal distemper, whatever it was, sent for some of his chaplains, and conversed with them. Christ, said he, with a sigh, came into the world to save souls; ought not he, then, who takes pains to ruin souls, to be denominated Antichrist? Our God built the universe in six days, but he laboured more than thirty years to restore man when fallen. Is not then the destroyer of souls, the Antichrist and the enemy of God? 'The pope is not ashamed impudently to disannul, by his clauses of NON OBSTANTE, the decrees of the holy pontiffs, his predecessors. Many other popes have afflicted the Church; this INNOCENT has enslaved it more than they.'" He then recounts their usurious and fraudulent proceedings in England, and inveighs against the arts of amassing money practised by the friars on account of the crusades. I have seen, said he, an instrument, in which it was inserted, that those, who, in their wills, devised money for the use of the crusades, should receive indulgence in proportion to the sum they gave. He then exposed the scandalous practice of disposing of ecclesiastical benefices, and lamented that the friars, the devotees of poverty, were now converted

* Matt. Paris.

into tax-gatherers to the pope, belying the habit they wore, while they were made more secular than ever. The bishop, indignant at these and other horrible proceedings, observed, "The Church can never be delivered from this Egyptian bondage, but by the edge of the sword;" and while he was scarcely able to speak for sighs and tears, his breath and his voice failed him. He might be sharpened in his accusations by the personal ill-treatment which he himself had received; but it must be owned, that he had a distinct knowledge of facts, and a most just abhorrence of hypocrisy and iniquity. And it is only to be lamented, that he had lived so long a time, and remained so little acquainted with the only Christian armour of doctrine, which can cut down the powers of Antichrist. He died at Buckden, October 9, 1253. Innocent heard of his death with pleasure; and said with exultation, "I rejoice, and let every true son of the Roman Church rejoice with me, that my great enemy is removed." He ordered a letter to be written to King Henry, requiring him to take up the bishop's body, to cast it out of the church, and to burn it. The cardinals, however, opposed the tyrant; and the letter was never sent, probably on account of the decline of Innocent's health; for he died the succeeding year.

M. Paris, though most superstitiously attached to the Roman see, and prejudiced against Grosseteste, on account of his severity towards the ancient monastic orders, was, however, a man of probity and honour; and he has left such a testimony to the character of Grosseteste as deserves to be presented to the reader.*

"The holy bishop, Robert, departed this world, which he never loved, and which was always to him as a place of banishment. He was the open reprover both of my lord the pope, and of the king, and the censurer of the prelates, the corrector of monks, the director of priests, the instructor of the clergy, the supporter of scholars, the preacher to the laity, the punisher of incontinence, the diligent investigator of various writings, and lastly, he was the scourge of lazy and selfish Romans, whom he heartily despised. In the supply of the temporal table, liberal, copious, polite, cheerful, and affable. In the spiritual table, devout, humble, and contrite. In the episcopal office, diligent, venerable, and indefatigable."

* Matt. Paris, p. 876. Edit. Lond. 1640.

The historian adds to this, "that even in those instances of discipline, in which he seemed to bear the hardest on the monks, he was allowed to have acted always with the purest intentions."

Grosseteste appears to have had no great turn for public business; he neglected it for the most part: nor did he frequent the court. The salvation of souls was the perpetual subject of his thoughts and conversation; and it is devoutly to be wished that many, whose evangelical light is far superior to his, resembled him in tenderness of conscience, in unwearied activity and zeal, and in genuine humility and modesty of spirit, with which, notwithstanding the disadvantage of a temper irascible in a great degree, he was very eminently endowed.

In one of his letters he shows the idea which he had formed of the importance of the pastoral office.* "I dare not, for the love of God," says he, "confer the care of souls on any one, who will not sedulously discharge the office in person. The office itself is of the greatest importance; it requires a governor always *RESIDENT*, who applies himself to it with vigilance, prudence, diligence, and fervour; who preaches the word of the Lord in season and out of season; who exhibits himself an example of good works; who, when he gives salutary admonition and is not regarded, can grieve and lament; who shakes his hands from holding bribes; who so evidently applies to pious uses the pecuniary fines, which he receives for the punishment of faults, that he is perfectly free from all suspicion of selfishness and avarice on that account; who is delighted when he can, with a good conscience, acquit the accused; whom no prejudice, passion, entreaty, or gift, or partiality, can divert from the path of rectitude; who delights in labour, and whose whole desire is to profit souls." He who, in an age of superstition, which afforded so many temptations to venality and corruption, could act according to the spirit of these rules, must have been possessed of the Spirit of Christ, and have been superior to the spirit of the world.

To have so much enlarged on the character and transactions of a man so little distinguished, in regard to evangelical knowledge, as bishop Grosseteste was, from the common herd of papists in his time, might seem to need an apology, were I not sensible that the eminence of his

* Pegge.

PRACTICAL godliness demonstrates that he must have been in possession of the fundamentals of Divine Truth; and, that the candid and intelligent reader may receive edification from a light which burned with steadiness in the Church of God, though in much obscurity.

The evidence, however, of Grosseteste's knowledge of fundamental truths is not only to be collected by fair inferences, but is also direct and positive. A number of his sermons in manuscript are still extant.* I have examined one of these throughout, which was preached from our Saviour's words in the sixth chapter of St. Luke, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." To the directions and cautions concerning humility, which indeed form the most evangelical and most useful part of the sermon, Grosseteste adds some directions concerning the contempt of the world, and the love of heavenly things. On the latter subject he quotes Augustine and Gregory; on the former, he addresses his audience as having already embraced voluntary poverty. Hence it appears, that the discourse was addressed to a company of Ascetics; and it must be confessed that he labours with great correctness to prevent them from presumptuously imagining themselves to be just and righteous. Throughout the discourse there is excellent matter, and it is well calculated to humble the proud; but there is very little to encourage the sincere. He seems to have no idea of the attainment of a state of solid peace and joy; nor is it to be wondered at. Like most of the very best divines who wrote in those days, he knew not the just nature of the Christian article of justification by Jesus Christ the righteous; and though he appears to have trusted in HIM for eternal salvation, and knew too well his own deficiencies, to put any trust in himself, yet he evidently wanted the full assurance of understanding of the MYSTERY OF GODLINESS,† and could not, with his inefficacious religious views, HAVE ACCESS WITH CONFIDENCE by the faith of Jesus.‡

The honest and intrepid spirit with which bishop Grosseteste opposed the scandalous practices of Pope Innocent IV. has sufficiently appeared in the course of this chapter. But the Christian reader may not be displeased to see additional proofs of the genuine humility of his

* They are preserved in the cathedral of St. Peter at York.

† Coloss. ii. 2.

‡ Eph. iii. 12.

mind. Self-righteousness and self-confidence seem to have been his great aversion. Dependence on God as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, was his grand practical principle.—The following passage, translated from the Latin *Opuscula* of Grosseteste,* is from one of his letters which he wrote while he was archdeacon of Leicester.

“Nothing that occurs in your letters ought to give me more pain than your styling me a person invested with authority, and endued with the lustre of knowledge. So far am I from thinking as you do, that I feel myself unfit even to be the disciple of a person of authority; moreover, in innumerable matters which are objects of knowledge, I perceive myself enveloped in the darkness of ignorance. But did I really possess the great qualities you ascribe to me, HE alone would be worthy of the praise, and the whole of it ought to be referred unto HIM, to whom we daily say, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the glory.”

In general, he was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures; fervent in spirit, speaking and teaching boldly the things of the Lord;—though, like Apollos, he sometimes needed an “Aquila and Priscilla to expound to him the way of God more perfectly.”

* Vol. ii Fascic. rer.

CENTURY THE FOURTEENTH.

CHAP. I.

THE GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THIS CENTURY.

THE same ignorance and superstition, the same vices and immoralities, which predominated in the last century, discoloured the appearance of the Church in this. Real Christians were still to be found either only among the Waldenses, or else they worshipped God in obscurity under the unspeakable disadvantages of the general corruption. There arose, indeed, in this century various sects, besides the Waldenses, who were cruelly persecuted both by popes and emperors; of whom, therefore, at first sight, we are ready to conclude, that they must have been the real people of God. I cannot, however, find positive evidence that they professed the real doctrines, or were influenced by the real Spirit of Jesus. Some of them were the disgrace of human nature, both in their principles and their practice; and I mean not to detail the narratives of fanaticisms with which most ecclesiastical histories abound. The term Lollard was affixed in general to all those who professed, whether on solid principles of godliness or not, a greater degree of attention to acts of piety and devotion, than the rest of mankind. Of these, Walter Raynard, a Dutchman, was apprehended and burnt at Cologne. This is he, whom I have already called Raynard Lollard, in the account of the Waldenses, and from whom the Wickliffites are supposed to have acquired the name of Lollards. I have carefully attended to Mosheim's account of the origin of the term,* and am convinced from his reasonings, that Lollard was a general name of reproach given to professors of piety, and not the proper name of any particular person. But it by no means thence follows, as Mosheim

* See Mosheim, vol. i. pp. 744, 757.

contends, that Walter Raynard always belonged to some sect of the Romish communion. The accounts of the most eminent German authors constantly represent him as a Protestant, and the common use of the term Lollard in England, as applied to the followers of Wickliffe and of Walter Raynard, could scarcely have obtained, if the latter had continued a Papist till his death.*

The Church of God, therefore, considered as an outward society, seems only to have existed among the WALDENSES, whose history has been related. Of other sects the detail would be as insipid as it would be obscure and perplexed; and whoever has remarked the confusion of terms, which negligence, obloquy, or artifice have introduced into the ecclesiastical accounts of sects and parties, will find little reason to acquiesce in the arrangements of their classes, which writers in different ages have made. Let us attend to facts rather than to terms. It is certain, that there were many societies of persons in this century called Beghards, Beguines, Lollards, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Flagellants, &c., who suffered extremely from the iron hand of power. Among all these, the people called WALDENSES, and called also Lollards,—with what propriety is a question of little importance,—seem perfectly distinguished, by their solid piety, sound scriptural judgment, and practical godliness; and therefore they may justly be accounted to have suffered for righteousness' sake; while the rest, as far as certainly appears, were the martyrs of folly, turbulence, or impiety.

In the East, the profession of Christianity still pervaded that contracted empire of the Greeks, of which Constantinople was the metropolis. But no Christian records are come down to us of any thing like the primitive Gospel. Even the profession of Christianity, which had existed in China, was extirpated through the jealousy of the reigning powers; and the famous Tamerlane, the Tartar, cruelly persecuted all who bore the Christian name, being persuaded, as a Mahometan, that it was highly meritorious to destroy them. Thus even the form of godliness declined in Asia; the power of it, alas! had vanished long before. Nor were the attempts, which

* On the contrary, as it has been mentioned already, Walter Raynard, from a Franciscan and an enemy, became a Waldensian, preached the Gospel, and suffered on that account at Cologne.—Vol. iii. p. 373.

were made in Europe to renew the crusades, by means of indulgences, calculated to revive the light of the Gospel in the East, even if they had succeeded. The Holy Land had been lost in 1291; and an army was collected in 1363, under the auspices of pope Urban V., commanded by John, king of France, that same monarch who had been taken prisoner by Edward the Black Prince, at the battle of Poitiers. But John departed this life, and Urban's hopes from the crusade were blasted.

In the mean time the boundaries of Christianity had been gradually extended in Europe.* Jagello, duke of Lithuania, was now almost the only Pagan prince in that quarter of the world. And he, influenced by secular views, became a Christian in name and profession, and by this means acquired the crown of Poland. The Teutonic knights continued also the military methods of obliging the Prussians and Livonians to profess the Gospel, and completed in this century what they had begun in the last.

The maxims and examples of the court of Rome were unspeakably prejudicial to the cause of godliness in this century. The practice of PROVISIONS, which had so much inflamed the zeal of bishop Grosseteste, was now reduced into a system by the popes who resided in France, and all Europe complained of their impositions. In England, in the beginning of the reign of Edward III., almost upon every vacancy the court of Rome pretended to fill the sees in this way.† Indeed its ambition and avarice were unbounded: it claimed a right to dispose of all offices in the Church both great and small, and in that way amassed incredible sums. That same Boniface VIII., who was possessor of the pontifical see at the close of the last century, filled the Christian world with the noise and turbulence of his ambition. He followed the steps of Hildebrand, and attempted to be equally despotic in civil and ecclesiastical matters. He it was who forbade the clergy to pay any thing to princes without his permission.‡ He also instituted a jubilee, which was to be renewed every hundred years, by which he granted plenary indulgences to all strangers, who should visit the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome.§ This unprincipled pontiff

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 713.

† Collier.

‡ Du Pin.

§ The successors of Boniface, finding that the jubilee augmented

died in extreme misery in 1303, in the ninth year of his papacy.*

The schism which afterwards took place in the popedom was providentially a blessing to mankind. While, for the space of fifty years, the church of Rome had two or three heads at the same time; and while each of the contending popes was anathematizing his competitors, the reverence of mankind for the popedom itself insensibly diminished; it was impossible for the most credulous to believe that all the popes were infallible; and the labours of those, whom God raised up to propagate divine truth, began to be more seriously regarded by men of conscience and probity.

In this century flourished the celebrated John Duns Scotus. Whether he was born in England, Scotland, or Ireland, has been disputed. That he was a famous schoolman is well known. But in the light of true religion I know nothing concerning him. The same thing may be said of Raymund Lully, William Ockham of Surrey, in England, and of Petrarch, that great reviver of polite literature in Italy. These were some of the most famous men in their age; but they helped not the Church of God. Toward the close, however, of this period,—for the most part one of the most uninteresting in Church history,—there arose in England a luminary, WICKLIFFE, whose principles, conduct, and writings will require distinct consideration. The same country furnishes us also with another equally rare and excellent, though much less celebrated character, I mean BRADWARDINE, archbishop of Canterbury, of whom an account will be given in the next chapter.—In the remainder of this it will be worth while to add a few particular circumstances, which may show in what sort of an age Bradwardine lived.

The accounts of individuals in this century, who truly feared God and wrought righteousness, are extremely scarce. One person I find on the continent, who seems not unworthy of a place in these memoirs, I mean

the revenue of the Roman church, fixed its return to every fiftieth and afterwards to every twenty-fifth year.

* His political intrigues caused the French king and some of the cardinals to unite against him, and after having been plundered of his wealth, and kept a prisoner for some time, he died “partly for fear which he was in, partly for famine, and partly for sorrow for his lost treasure.”—See Fox.

Eleazar, count of Arian in Naples, born in 1295. At the age of twenty-three he succeeded to his father's estate. That this youth, in very affluent circumstances, and at a time of life when the passions are usually strong, could support a constant tenour of devotion and religious seriousness to his death, which took place about five years after, seems scarcely to have originated from principles lower than those of real Christianity. The regulations of his household are very remarkable ; some of which are as follows :

“ I cannot allow any blasphemy in my house, nor any thing in word or deed which offends the laws of decorum.

“ Let the ladies spend the morning in reading and prayer, the afternoon at some work.

“ Dice and all games of hazard are prohibited.

“ Let all persons in my house divert themselves at proper times, but never in a sinful manner.

“ Let there be constant peace in my family ; otherwise two armies are formed under my roof, and the master is devoured by them both.

“ If any difference arise, let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

“ We must bear with something, if we have to live among mankind. Such is our frailty, we are scarcely in tune with ourselves a whole day ; and if a melancholy humour come on us, we know not well what we would have.

“ Not to bear and not to forgive, is diabolical ; to love enemies, and to do good for evil, is the mark of the children of God.

“ Every evening all my family shall be assembled at a godly conference, in which they shall hear something of God and salvation. Let none be absent on pretence of attending to my affairs. I have no affairs so interesting to me as the salvation of my domestics.

“ I seriously forbid all injustice, which may cloak itself under colour of serving me.

“ If I feel impatience under affront,” said he, on one occasion, “ I look at Christ. Can any thing, which I suffer, be like to that which he endured for me ?”

We are told that his conduct in life corresponded to these maxims. I could not prevail on myself to pass over in silence such a character as this, whom general history, full of the intrigues and ambitious enterprises of popes and princes, neither knows nor regards. God has

his secret saints in the dullest seasons of the Church, and Eleazar seems to have been one of these. But he was soon removed from this vale of sorrow; for he died in the twenty-eighth year of his age. His behaviour in his last sickness was conformable with his life. The history of our Saviour's passion was read to him daily, and his mind was consoled by this means amidst the pains with which he was afflicted.*

But, whoever in these times had any serious impressions of religion, could scarcely meet with the least solid instruction. For the preaching of the word was so much disused, that it is remarked as a singular commendation of Thomas de la Mare, abbot of St. Alban's in the time of our king Edward III., that he preached in the priory of Tinmouth, where he presided before he was elected abbot of St. Alban's, and employed many secular clergy and mendicants to do the same, perceiving the function of preaching to be wholly omitted in monasteries,† little practised by the seculars, and engrossed by the mendicants. If "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," we may venture to affirm, that whenever Christian preaching is disused or despised, whether through the influence of superstition or of refinement, then godliness is at a low ebb, and the principles of Christianity are almost unknown. A pious Eleazar may, in some measure, supply the want to his own family; but what must be the state of knowledge in the world at large? The truths of the Gospel are by no means obvious; they require study, attention, meditation; all the prejudices of our fallen nature oppose them when brought into full prospect: how dark then must be the minds of those who never hear of them! The formalities of monasticism may give a false peace to the conscience, but they cannot enlighten the understanding, nor regulate the heart. Hence, amidst the most splendid appearances of religion, wickedness abounded, and a cumbersome mass of superstitions was a poor substitute for the love of God and man. In the abbey of St. Alban's the superiors decked themselves with excess of pompous attire. They

* Butler, vol. ix. It is more than probable that there were many more whose knees did not bow to the Baal of Romish superstition; but they were passed without notice by the historians of those times.—Ed.

† Newcome's History of St. Alban's.

wore vestments as rich as art and money could make them ; and though they changed their attire every day, they could not bring them all into use. Such was the state of things during the presidency of Thomas de la Mare, an abbot, who was looked on as the mirror of piety.

Some attempts, were, however, made in England to stem the torrent of ecclesiastical corruption. Even in the preceding century, about the year 1265,* a national synod, held at London under Othobon, the pope's legate, undertook to reform the abuses, of which the whole nation loudly complained. This synod, in which Welsh, Scotch, and Irish clergymen were present as well as English, was looked on as of great authority, and its decisions as a rule of ecclesiastical discipline to the Church. Several of its canons are still in force, and make part of the canon law.† The ninth canon provides against the evil of non-residence, obliges the clergyman presented to a benefice to resign his other preferments, and to swear to reside, The twentieth provides against commutations for offences, and forbids the archdeacon ever to receive money on such accounts ; for " such practices," say the synod, " amount, in effect, to the grant of a license to sin." Severe, but just censure of the whole papal doctrine of indulgences ! How little room was there to hope, that this canon would be strictly observed in archdeaconries, or in any other limited district, while the supreme rulers of the Church were breaking it continually !

In a council held at Lambeth in 1281,‡ a canon was enacted, which lays down rules of preaching concerning the fundamental articles of religion. It contains some wholesome truths, but mixed with much superstition. But the worst part of the canon is, that the parish priest was obliged to explain these fundamental articles only once a quarter. One is almost tempted to think, that the dignitaries of the Church formerly prohibited some abuses, merely to save appearances, and were afraid, lest frequency of preaching might prove the means of a complete reformation. In this same council at Lambeth they allow the BLOOD of Christ in the lesser churches only to the

* Collier.

† Several of these canons are only Otho's constitutions confirmed and enforced with further penalties.

‡ Collier.

priest, and the WINE which they granted to the laity, they said, was merely wine. It was expressly declared, that the whole body and blood of Christ was given at once under the species of bread; though sometimes a cup of wine was given to the people.* And thus the innovation of denying to the laity communion in both kinds was gradually introduced. This was one of the latest, and at the same time, one of the most shameless and absurd corruptions of popery, destitute of every ground of argument, either from Scripture or common sense; nor is it easy to conceive how it could ever have found its way into Christendom. But those who invented it intended to strengthen men's minds in the belief of transubstantiation, and also by sensible marks to impress on the imaginations of the people the superior dignity of the clergy.† Be this as it may, we certainly find that, in the century which we are at present reviewing, superstition has advanced some steps farther.

In the reign of Edward I., one of the wisest and most vigorous of our princes, it was natural for those who groaned under Romish oppressions, to expect some relief. But the pusillanimous conduct of his father, Henry III., had, during a very long reign, enabled the popes to enslave the nation completely, and unless the successor had himself felt the spirit of godliness, of which there are no evidences, it was not to be expected that he would exert himself for the good of the Church. Edward indeed was very great in the arts both of war and of peace; but in ecclesiastical matters he did much less for his country. He paid, though with reluctance, the tribute imposed on king John, which had been remitted to Rome all the days of Henry III. He would not, however, allow it to be called a tribute; and he constantly maintained that he was not a vassal of the Roman see. His weak son and successor, Edward II., cannot be supposed to have been capable of relieving the nation; but under Edward III. something was done to restrain the encroachments of the popedom. This great prince resolutely

* Spelman, Concil. p. 329. Henry's Hist. book. v.

† The reason for denying the cup to the laity is obvious. If the truth of transubstantiation is admitted, and the bread is changed into the blood as well as the body of Christ, it is needless; while administering the wine would add to the expense and trouble, and the carrying about the wine would hazard its being spilt, and its supposed profanation.—Ed.—See Bishop Jewel.

refused to pay the annual stipend to Rome, and procured a parliamentary declaration, that king John had no right to reduce the English realm to a state of vassalage. By the statute of provisors he secured the rights of patrons and electors of livings, against the claims of the papal see, and outlawed those who should dare to appeal to Rome.

On the Continent also the papal tyranny met with some opposition. The emperor Lewis was excommunicated by Pope Clement VI., because he had dared to exercise the imperial authority, which had been conferred on him by the electors, without waiting for the confirmation of the pope: and so prevalent was the reign of superstition, that Lewis was obliged to renounce the imperial dignity. There were not wanting, however, some learned men, who protested against these papal usurpations, and particularly Marsilius of Padua, who published a defence of the emperor's authority against the encroachments of the pope, and maintained some Protestant positions, not only in regard to ecclesiastical government, but also in support of that which is infinitely more important, the pure doctrine of the Gospel. In substance he appears to have held that leading article of Christianity, justification before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings: and he affirmed, that good works are not the efficient cause of our acceptance with God, but that, on the contrary, they are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, which, in effect, never exists for any length of time without them.* Distinctions in the eyes of superficial thinkers in religion always apparently frivolous, though they are inseparably connected with the true relief of burdened consciences, and though they directly tend not only to undermine the whole system of papal fallacy, but also to promote true holiness of heart and life.—But of this same Marsilius, who saw so clearly an essential branch of Evangelical truth, I rather conjecture than affirm, that he had the spirit of a wise and holy reformer.

About the same time, that is, about the middle of this century, Conrade Hager, in the city of Herbipoli,† taught for the space of twenty-four years together, that the Mass was not properly a sacrifice for sin; and of consequence was of no avail either to the living or to the dead for their acceptance with God; and therefore that the money

* Fox, Acts and Monum. vol i. p. 443.

† Ibid. p. 445.

bestowed on the priests for masses in behalf of the deceased, was pregnant with superstitious abominations. It is probable, that he taught also good doctrine, as well as opposed that which was evil. He was condemned as a heretic, and imprisoned; but history is silent concerning the issue of his afflictions.

In general, however, the great defect of those who withstood the reigning corruptions of these times was this; they distinctly complained of the fashionable abominations, but were very scanty in describing the real evangelical doctrines, which alone can relieve and sanctify the souls of men. This remark is but too applicable to the very best of the reformers, who appeared in Europe from this time till the era of the REFORMATION. That was a work, which well deserved its name, because it builded up as well as pulled down, and presented the Church with a new fabric, as well as demolished the old. It was a work in which the characters of a Divine influence appeared far more completely than in any of the former attempts against popery; and therefore its effects were lasting.—They remain to this day.

BUT THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS IS NOT TO BE DESPISED.*

In this century, and probably towards the close of it, the “*Ploughman's Complaint*” appeared in England; an excellent tract, which, with much zeal and energy, described the reigning abuses, and stated the true doctrines of the Gospel, and which, doubtless, was not without effect.

Richard Fitzraf† was one of the most eminent confessors in this age. He was brought up at Oxford, and promoted by Edward III. to the archbishopric of Armagh in Ireland. He distinguished himself by opposing the pretensions of the Mendicant orders; who, armed with papal authority, encroached on the rights of the secular clergy, and prevented them from the exercise of godly discipline. “I have,” said he, “in my diocese of Armagh, about two thousand persons, who stand condemned by the censures of the church, denounced every year against murderers, thieves, and such like malefactors, of all which numbers, scarcely fourteen have applied to me or my clergy for absolution. Yet they all receive the sacraments, as others do, because they are absolved, or pretend to be absolved, by friars.”

* Zech. iv.

† Fox, p. 464, &c.

Nor was this the only point in which Fitzraf opposed the Mendicants. He withstood their practice of begging; and maintained, that it is every man's duty to support himself by honest labour;—that it forms no part of Christian wisdom and holiness for men to profess themselves Mendicants,—that to subsist by begging ought to be matter of necessity, never of choice,—that the Son of God, as he never taught such doctrine, so he never practised it in his own person,—and that, though he was always poor when on earth, he never was a beggar. This was to strike at the root of the pretended sanctity of the friars, who were enraged to find the very practice, in which they gloried as matter of extraordinary virtue, represented as in its own nature unlawful. Fitzraf was therefore cited by the friars to appear before pope Innocent VI., and to give an account of the doctrine which he had broached and maintained both in the pulpit and in conversation. The archbishop obeyed; and, in the presence of the pope, defended at large the rights of parochial ministers against the intrusion of the Mendicants, and exposed the various enormities of the latter. What effect his defence had on the mind of the pope does not distinctly appear. It is certain, however, that this confessor was persecuted both by civil and ecclesiastical powers, and suffered a variety of hardships. In a certain confession or prayer which our martyrologist* saw, and intended, as he tells us, to publish, Fitzraf describes the history of his own life, and particularly declares how the Lord had instructed him, and brought him out of the vanities of Aristotelian subtilty to the study of the Scriptures. The beginning of the prayer in Latin is given us by Fox, and deserves to be translated; “To Thee be praise, glory, and thanksgiving, O Jesus most holy, most powerful, most amiable, who hast said, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life;’ a way without aberration, truth without a cloud, and a life without end. For thou hast shown to me the way; thou hast taught me truth; and thou hast promised me life. Thou wast my way in exile, thou wast my truth in counsel, and thou wilt be my life in reward.”

This distinguished person was seven or eight years in banishment, and died in that situation, having defended his tenets by words and by writings to his death. Of his refutation of the reigning abuses the account is large, but

* Fox.

to us, at least at this day, tedious and unnecessary; of his Christian spirit, doctrine, and sufferings, the account is very brief, but I think sufficient to show that GOD WAS WITH HIM.

About the year 1372, pope Gregory XI. despatched a bull to the archbishop of Prague, in which he commanded him to excommunicate Militzius, a Bohemian. This man had belonged to some religious order at Prague, and having forsaken it, had given himself to preaching, and had certain congregations following him. Among these were several harlots, who being converted from their wickedness, now led a godly life. Militzius was wont to say of them, that in religious attainments they were superior to all the nuns in Christendom. Another of his assertions, which provoked the indignation of pope Gregory, was, that Antichrist was already come. In his writings, he declared that he was moved by the Holy Spirit, to search out by the Scriptures concerning the coming of Antichrist. Little more is recorded concerning this confessor than that he was, at length, silenced and imprisoned by the archbishop of Prague.

There were others who opposed the corruptions of the times; but the account is too obscure and scanty to be interesting. Both in private and in public life there were doubtless some sincere servants of God and his Christ; and I wish I could gratify the mind of the pious reader with an instructive relation of them. But of such men history is almost silent. APPARENT RARI NANTES IN GURGITE VASTO.*—However, in the dearth of faithful and intelligent Christians, a brief review of the character and writings of Thomas Bradwardine will not only afford gratification, but excite surprise.—He appears to have been an extraordinary man; and has left behind him unequivocal marks of real holiness.

CHAP. II.

THOMAS BRADWARDINE.

THIS learned and pious person is supposed to have been born about the middle of the reign of king Edward I.

• They are scarcely to be discerned upon the vast expanse.

He was of Merton College, Oxford, and was one of the proctors of that university in 1325. He excelled in mathematical knowledge, and was in general distinguished for his accurate and solid investigations in divinity. There was a depth in his researches which entitled him to the name of "the PROFOUND."* He seems to have been so devoted to a recluse and sedentary life, that very little has come down to us concerning his conduct and transactions. He was confessor to king Edward III., and attended that monarch in his French wars. It is observed that he often preached before the army. On occasion of a vacancy in the see of Canterbury, the monks of that city chose him archbishop; but Edward, who was fond of his company, refused to part with him. Another vacancy happening soon after, the monks elected him a second time, and Edward yielded to their desires. The modesty and innocence of his manners, and his unquestionable piety and integrity, seem to have been the principal causes of his advancement. He was, however, by no means adapted to a court; and soon found himself out of his element. His personal manners and deportment were the object of derision to the courtiers; and when he was consecrated at Avignon, cardinal Hugh, a nephew of the pope, ridiculed the prelate, by introducing into the hall a person habited as a peasant riding on an ass, petitioning the pope to make him archbishop of Canterbury.† This was one of "the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes." But the jest was found not to answer the ungenerous views of him who made it. It appeared to the assembly that solid learning and understanding, though destitute of exterior accomplishments, when clothed with piety and humility, as in Bradwardine's case, were by no means proper subjects of ridicule and contempt. The pope and his cardinals resented the indignity, and frowned on the insolent contriver.

Bradwardine was consecrated in 1349, in the twenty-third year of Edward III.; but not many weeks after his consecration, and only seven days after his return into England, he died at Lambeth. His departure out of life seems to have been a providential mercy to himself. For we may well doubt whether his elevation would have increased either his comfort or his reputation. He, who,

* Bradwardine's Life, prefixed to his works.

† Henry's History of England, fourteenth century.

before his promotion, was judged of all men the most worthy to preside in the Church, would, in all probability, partly on account of the habits of a studious life and partly on account of the complexion of the times, have soon been deemed unequal to the office. In the early periods of the Church he might have shone with distinguished lustre ; but a pious archbishop of simple manners was not adapted for that age.

His great work was “ Concerning the Cause of God against Pelagius.” An admirable performance ! whether one considers the force of his genius, the solidity of his reasoning powers, or the energy of his devotion. In reviewing it, it gave me great satisfaction to observe, that in one of the darkest periods the Spirit of God had raised up a defender of divine truth. Abstracted from the spirit of the times in which he lived, Bradwardine gave himself up to the investigation of real gospel truth ; and he published to the world, in a large volume, the fruit of his researches. Some few extracts may give the reader a just idea of his doctrine and spirit ; and may also throw some light on the state of religion in the age in which he lived.

In the preface he lays open his heart, and explains the exercise of his mind on the great subject of divine grace, which he attempts to defend against the supporters of the doctrine of freewill ; a term which I have repeatedly observed to be improper ; and which, as used by him, and by most, if not all, of the fathers, who really loved evangelical truth, means much the same as self-sufficiency.* Bradwardine had observed how very few in his days appeared to be conscious of their need of the Holy Spirit to renew their natures ; and being himself deeply sensible of the† desperate wickedness of the human heart, and of the preciousness of the grace of Christ, he seems to have overlooked, or little regarded, the fashionable superstitions of his time, and to have applied the whole vigour and vehemence of his spirit to the defence of the foundations of the Gospel. But let us hear him speak for himself.

“ As I am somewhat encouraged by the countenance of

* Or rather it means an ability to determine what we *will* choose ; a thing absolutely impossible to a mind *under the bondage of Satan*.—
ED.

† Jerem. xvii. 9.

those who love the cause of God, so I own I am discouraged by the opposition of those who embrace the cause of Pelagius, who are, alas! far more numerous. For behold, I speak it with real grief of heart, as formerly eight hundred and fifty prophets, with the addition of numbers of the populace without end, were united against one prophet of the Lord, so at this day, how many, O Lord, contend for freewill against thy gratuitous grace, and against St. Paul the spiritual champion of grace! How many, indeed, in our times despise thy saving grace; and maintain, that freewill suffices for salvation! or if they use the term grace, how do they boast that they deserve it by the strength of freewill; so that grace in their eyes appears to be sold at a price, and not freely conferred from above! How many, presuming on the power of their own freewill, refuse thy influence in their operations, saying, with the ungodly, Depart from us! How many, extolling the liberty of their own will, refuse thy service; or, if with their lips they own that thou dost co-operate with them, how do they, like the proud, disobedient angels of old, who hated thee, refuse that thou shouldst reign over them! Nay, prouder than Satan, and not content to esteem themselves thy equals, they most arrogantly boast, that they reign above thee, the King of kings. For they fear not to maintain, that their own will in common actions goes before as the mistress, that thine follows as a handmaid; that they go before as lords, that thou followest as a servant; that they as kings command, and that thou as a subject obeyest. How many support Pelagianism with clamour, raillery, and derision! Almost the whole world is gone after Pelagius into error. Arise, O Lord, judge thy own cause: sustain him who undertakes to defend thy truth; protect, strengthen, and comfort me. For thou knowest, that no where relying on my own strength, but trusting in thine, I, a weak worm, attempt to maintain so great a cause."

From the vehemence of his complaints it appears, that together with the triumphant progress of superstition, the Christian world had made rapid advances in self-sufficiency. The scholastic learning, which was ardently cultivated, had enlisted itself on the side of Pelagianism, or at least of semi-Pelagianism. Those who were not hardy enough to maintain the merit of *condignity*, yet strenuously held the merit of *congruity*, which was indeed

the favourite theme of the fashionable divines. By its assistance they arrogated to themselves the merit of doing certain good actions, which would render it meet and equitable that God should confer saving grace on their hearts.* This is that grace of congruity which the Church of England condemns in her 13th Article; and it was precisely one of those contrivances, by which the natural pride of a heart unacquainted with its own total apostasy endeavours to support its dignity, and to prevent an ingenuous confession of helplessness and of complete unworthiness. History shows this sentiment to be perfectly semi-Pelagian. "Inward preventing grace," say that sect, "is not necessary to form in the soul the first beginnings of true repentance and amendment; every one is capable of producing these by the mere power of his natural faculties, as also of exercising faith in Christ, and of forming the purposes of a holy, and sincere obedience." But they acknowledge also, that "none can persevere or advance in that holy and virtuous course, without the perpetual support and the powerful assistance of grace."†

Something like this seems to be the religion natural to man as a fallen creature, when he "leans to his own understanding," and derives not his creed from divine revelation; and when at the same time he is not advanced by a more uncommon degree of hardihood into the pride of perfect Pelagianism. On this plan, Bradwardine thinks, that God is made the servant, man the master; and it is remarkable, that a poet of our own who seems to have embraced this scheme, admits the same thought, when he says,

Heaven but persuades, Almighty man decrees;
Man is the maker of immortal Fates.‡

I am sensible, how much has been said, and may be said with great plausibility, in support of the poet's doctrine. But it is perfectly foreign to the design of this history, to enter into so boundless a field of controversy. Suffice it once more to refer the reader to Edwards's treatise on the Freedom of the Will, for a full and complete confutation of the scheme. I shall only add, that all truly

* Condignity implies merit; and, of course, claims reward on the score of justice. Congruity pretends only to a sort of imperfect qualification for the gift and reception of God's grace.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 277.

‡ Young's Night Thoughts, Night 7.

humble souls, whose consciences have felt the force of Christian doctrine, are assuredly persuaded that their salvation is altogether of grace from first to last, by the certain testimony not only of Scripture,* but also of their own experience, though they may never have formally discussed the controversy before us. Such a soul, if I mistake not, was that of Bradwardine ; and as he was conscious of the pernicious tendency of SELF-SUFFICIENCY, he writes from a heart inflamed with zeal for the divine glory, and labouring with charitable concern for the souls of men.

Bradwardine goes on in his preface to inform us, how he had prayed, and with what strength and consolation he had been favoured. After having described the opposition made to divine grace from age to age, he thus concludes : “ I know, O Lord God, that thou dost not despise nor forsake those who love thee, but thou dost sustain, teach, cherish, strengthen, and confirm them. Relying on this thy goodness and truth, I undertake to war under thy invincible banners.”

The treatise itself is worthy of him who was called the **PROFOUND**. The author appears to have been endowed with a strong argumentative mind ; but the work is too metaphysical for the perusal of ordinary readers, nor would it answer any valuable purpose to present the reader with a regular abridgment of its contents. The mode of writing in that age was tedious and prolix beyond measure ; and it must be ascribed to the infection of the scholastic turn of those times, that Bradwardine wrote against the errors of the schoolmen in their own style and manner. He possessed not the useful qualification of writing in a plain scriptural manner, and of making use of arguments equally capable of impressing all ranks of men. The popular talent of perspicuously displaying divine truths, and of happily illustrating them by proofs drawn from the Scripture and experience, was at that time hardly known in Christendom.

Some concise observations however, and a selection of a few remarkable passages, may give the reader an idea of the nature of the work.

* “ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.” Philipp. ii. 12, 13. This very important passage of Scripture, while it demonstrates both the necessity and the efficacy of Divine Grace, shows at the same time, that the Holy Spirit nevertheless operates on the mind of man as a rational creature, possessed of will and understanding.

Bradwardine undertakes to lay before mourning penitents the consolations of the gospel; and, particularly, to animate and cheer the hearts of those who are ready to despair on account of the greatness of their transgressions.* He tells us that some Jews once declared to him, that those who had sinned four times repeatedly, were entirely excluded from all possibility of pardon, grounding their notion on the expression several times repeated in the first chapter of Amos, “for three transgressions, and for four.” Against this mean conceit, worthy of a rabbinical taste, he shows the immensity of the divine perfections of goodness and mercy, and represents them as far surpassing the limited evils of man, provided the sinner repent and humbly come to God.

“Josephus † tells us,” says he, “that the Sadducees thought it a glorious thing to contend against the renowned doctors of their nation in philosophical points: thus, at this day, I fear very many seek glory, by overturning or seeming to overturn the constructions and interpretations of others. They, who have not a single house or cottage ‡ of their own erection, are peculiarly infected with the love of glory; they are indeed the bolder in dismantling the buildings of others, because they are in no fear of retaliation, as they have nothing of their own to lose.” So exactly similar have sceptics been in all ages! for example, the Sadducees in the time of Josephus, the Pelagians in the time of Bradwardine, and those who at this day arrogate to themselves exclusively the credit of being RATIONAL in religion. Dubious and hesitating in regard to their own systems, vehement and decisive against the systems of others, they even glory that they have not yet completed their own creed, while they condemn as bigots all who profess to have determinate articles of faith, as if the perfection of wisdom lay in reasoning against every thing, and in determining nothing; or as if the Scripture was not a form of sound words, which we ought to hold fast without wavering, so far as it reveals to us the doctrines of God and the path of duty. Bradwardine observing, that a disputatious and sceptical spirit resulted from the pride of the heart, prays earnestly for a heaven-taught

* Book i. p. 20.

† P. 145.

‡ This metaphorical language is used by Bradwardine against the boasting critics of his own day, to denote their poverty of invention in religious subjects.

simplicity of mind ; and while he takes notice, that God despises the proud, he thankfully owns that he visits, illuminates, and rejoices with the simple.

Sir Henry Savile, the learned editor of the principal work of Bradwardine, informs us, that this extraordinary man devoted his main application to the study of theology and mathematics ; and that particularly in the latter he distanced, perhaps, the most skilful of his contemporaries. In proof of these assertions the editor refers to several of Bradwardine's mathematical tracts, and to a large manuscript volume of astronomical tables, which Sir Henry had then in his own possession, and considered as a very elaborate and valuable performance. But in divinity, says he, " this single treatise which I now publish, will be a lasting monument of his superior talents. It was written in support of the cause of God against the Pelagian heresy, which experience shows to be a growing evil in every age. The substance of the work had been delivered in lectures at Oxford ; and the author, at the request of the students of Merton College, arranged, enlarged, and polished them, while he was chancellor of the diocese of London. No sooner was this performance given to the public, than it was received with the greatest applause by all learned doctors, and found its way into almost every library throughout Europe. As Bradwardine was a very excellent mathematician, he endeavoured to treat theological subjects with a mathematical accuracy ; and was the first divine, as far as I know, who pursued that method. Hence this book against Pelagianism is one regular connected series of reasoning, from principles or conclusions which have been demonstrated before.

" If in the several lemmas and propositions, a mathematical accuracy is not on all occasions completely preserved, the reader must remember to ascribe the defect to the nature of the subject, rather than to the author."

This account of the extreme singularity of Bradwardine's taste appeared worthy of notice.

It has already been concisely observed, that Bradwardine attended king Edward the Third in his French wars, and that he often preached before the army. His biographer, Sir Henry, is more particular : he tells us, that some writers of that time attributed the signal victories of Edward, rather to the virtues and holy character of his chaplain and confessor Bradwardine, than to the bravery

or prudence of the monarch or of any other person. “ He made it his business to calm and mitigate the fierceness of his master’s temper, when he saw him either immoderately fired with warlike rage, or improperly flushed with the advantages of victory. He also often addressed the army ; and with so much meekness, and persuasive discretion, as to restrain them from those insolent excesses which are too frequently the attendants of military success.”

Bradwardine’s treatise against the Pelagians, which is so much extolled by Sir H. Savile, is a folio of almost nine hundred pages. It may not be disagreeable to the reader to peruse a few additional extracts, on account of the important matter they contain, and the mathematical accuracy of manner which this author constantly endeavours to support, and which is, in general, so unusual in the treating of such subjects.

OF THE DIVINE BEING.

Among the first positions which he undertakes to prove, are these. That God is not contingently, but necessarily perfect. That he is incapable of changing. That he is not liable, for example, to the emotions of joy, sorrow, anger ; or, in any respect passive. Since, if he were, he would be changeable ; whereas God is always the same, and never varies. He cannot change for the better, because he is already perfectly good. Neither can he change for the worse, because he is necessarily perfect, and therefore cannot cease to be so. Lastly, he cannot change to a state equally good, because such an alteration could answer no end, and would in reality imply some defect.*

He observes, that the DIVINE WILL is universally efficacious, which, he contends, is a mark of much higher perfection, than if his will could be frustrated, hindered, or miss of its intent. If it were possible for God to wish any thing, and yet not bring it to pass, he would and must from that moment cease to be perfectly happy ; especially as it is impossible that he should choose any thing but what is right.

CONCERNING MERIT.

Most powerfully he beats down the doctrine of HUMAN MERIT. He will not allow that men can merit at the hand of God, either antecedently or subsequently ; that is, either

* Lib. i. cap. 1.

prior to grace received, or after it. Is it not more bountiful to give than to barter? to bestow a thing freely, and for nothing, than for the sake of any preceding or subsequent desert, which would be a sort of price? Even a generous man often confers benefits on others, without any view to the previous or succeeding merit of the object. Much more does God do this, who is infinitely richer in bounty, than the most liberal of his creatures.”*

Has not TRUTH itself declared, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” And does not the Apostle of truth use the words, “In him we live, move, and have our being!” I therefore repeat, That it must be manifest to every one, who has a sound understanding, 1. That no thing whatever can put any other thing into motion, unless God himself, by his own proper influence, give motion to the thing so moved. 2. That no thing whatever can put any other into motion, without God’s being the immediate mover of it. And even, 3. That whatsoever is put in motion by any thing else, is more immediately moved by God himself than by the instrument which sets it in motion, be that instrument what it will. Now, if any person should cavil at this doctrine, and say, That this argument would make the Supreme Being the author of many actions, even wicked actions, which are not fit to be named, the answer is, The words which express those actions are not to be taken strictly or absolutely, but only as they relate to the creature, not as descriptive of the real essence of the actions, but only of their nature when viewed as the effects of human powers. In every formation and in every motion there must be some unoriginated former; else the process would be endless.†

It should be remembered, that the historian does not pretend to dictate to his reader, nor even to explain his own opinion on these intricate subjects. He only ventures to lay before him the judgment of an excellent Christian, and a most acute metaphysician of the fourteenth century.

OF THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE.

What Bradwardine delivers concerning the KNOWLEDGE of God is worthy of the utmost attention.

It is certain that God has a knowledge of all things present, of all things past, and of all things to come;

* Lib. i. cap. 1.

† Ibid. cap. 4, 5.

which knowledge is, in the highest sense, actual, particular, distinct, and infallible. It may be considered as either simple, or approbative. His simple or absolute knowledge extends to every thing. His knowledge of approbation, over and above the former, includes his good pleasure and complacency of will. He produces scripture in support of this distinction of the divine knowledge, as Matt. xxv. 12, Verily I say unto you, I KNOW you not. And 1 Cor. viii. 3, If any man love God, he is KNOWN of him.*

The fifteenth chapter of the first book is wholly taken up in proving, THAT THINGS KNOWN are not the foundation of the knowledge of God. Knowledge is a principal perfection in God. If therefore HIS knowledge were derived from the objects with which it is conversant, it would follow that a part of the perfection of God was derived from some other source than himself, in which case HE must cease to be self-perfect. He would moreover cease to be all-sufficient: he would stand in need of created help to render his knowledge complete. And how could his glory be unrivalled, if any portion of it were suspended on borrowed assistance? Add to this, if the things that are known by God, are verily the producing cause of his knowing them, they must be antecedent to his knowledge, either in the order of time, or of nature. But they are not prior to his knowledge in either of these respects; for they are all created in time; whereas God and his knowledge are eternal. Besides, if the Deity received any degree of his intelligence from the beings he has made, he would cease to be purely active; he would be passive in that reception. Whence it would also follow that he must be susceptible of change. Nay, he would degenerate into a sort of inferiority to the things known; and being dependent on them for his knowledge, he would, so far, be less noble than they. The Divine Understanding would, like ours, be occasionally in a state of suspense and fluctuation. God might be said to possess rather the power or capability of knowing, than knowledge itself. He would only be disposed to know either this or that, indifferently, as the thing might turn, and would be actuated and determined by agencies and casualties extraneous to himself. And thus he would neither be the highest nor the first. For these reasons Aristotle and Averroes were right in affirming

* Ibid. cap. 6, 7.

that the Divine knowledge is perfect as it exists in God himself, and neither is, nor can be, improved by any things that are known. In a similar manner, also, argues Peter Lombard. "If the things," says he, "which God knows, were the basis of the Divine knowledge, it would follow, that creatures contributed to improve their Maker's wisdom; and thus foolish man, or even the meanest beast of the field, would be exalted into an assistant, a counsellor, and a teacher of the all-wise God." Lastly, the testimony of Augustine is very much in point: God, says he, knows all his creatures both corporeal and incorporeal, not because they exist; for he was not ignorant of what he intended to create; but they therefore exist, because he foreknew them. Amidst the innumerable revolutions of advancing and departing ages, the knowledge of God is neither lessened nor augmented. No incident can possibly arise, which THOU, THOU, who knowest all things, didst not expect and foresee; and every created nature is what it is, in consequence of thy knowing it as such.

Neither are we to understand our profound scholar, as though he were contending for the mere ABSTRACT KNOWLEDGE of God as a principle of causation. No: according to him, the efficacy of the Divine knowledge depends on the sovereign irresistibility of the Divine will. "The will of God," says he, in his tenth chapter, "is universally efficacious, and invincible, and necessitates as a cause. It cannot be impeded, much less defeated, by any means whatever."

The following argument is expressed in terms remarkably concise and nervous.

If you allow, 1. That God is ABLE to do a thing, and, 2. That he is WILLING to do a thing; then, 3. I affirm, THAT thing will not, cannot go unaccomplished. God either does it now, or will certainly do it at the destined season, otherwise he must either lose his power, or change his mind. HE is in want of nothing to carry his purposes into execution. Hence the remark of the philosopher, *Si potuit et voluit, egit*. He that hath will and power to do a thing, certainly doth that thing. Again, if the will of God may be frustrated, the defeat would arise from the created wills of men or angels; but we can never allow any created will, angelic or human, to be superior to the will of the Creator. Both the Divine knowledge and the Divine will are altogether unchangeable, since if either one

or the other were to undergo an alteration, a change must take place in God himself.

OF FATE.

The sentiments of Bradwardine respecting FATE are evidently the result of profound thinking.

Many persons affirm the existence of fate; and many, particularly of the Catholic doctors, deny there is any such thing. The Stoics are advocates for fate; on the contrary, Augustine reprobates the idea of it, as inconsistent with a sound faith. The truth seems to be this: If by fate is to be understood an inevitable, coercive necessity, arising from the influence of the heavenly bodies, such a notion is not to be maintained: but if the word be taken in a lower sense, as implying, for example, only a disposition, or propensity in men to certain actions, this sentiment, with certain explanations, may be supported; and most certainly the idea of a Divine fate must be admitted, whether we consider the word as derived from FIAT or from FANDO. Is it not written, that in the beginning of the creation God said, fiat lux, LET THERE BE light, and there was light? Is it not written again, HE SPAKE and it was done? Now this Divine fate is chiefly a branch of the Divine will, which is the efficacious cause of all things. Augustine was of the same mind. "All that connection," says he, "and that train of causes, whereby every thing is what it is, are, by the Stoics, called Fate; the whole of which fate is to be ascribed to the will and power of the Supreme Being, who most justly is believed to foreknow all things, and to leave nothing unordained. The energy of the Divine will is unconquerably extended through all things. . . . We never reject that chain of causes, wherein the will of God has the grand sway. We avoid, however, giving it the name of fate; unless indeed you derive the word from fando, that is, from SPEAKING. For we cannot but acknowledge, that it is written in the Scriptures, God hath spoken ONCE, and these two things have I heard, that power belongeth unto God, and that mercy is with thee; for thou wilt render unto every man according to his works. Now when it is said, God hath SPOKEN ONCE, the meaning is, that he hath spoken unchangeably, and irreversibly, even as he foreknew all things that should come to pass. The kingdoms of men are absolutely appointed by Divine Providence; which, if any one

is desirous for that reason to attribute to fate, meaning by that word the will and power of God, let him hold fast the SENTIMENT and only correct the PHRASE." Bradwardine concludes his chapter on Fate with the following remarkable quotation from Augustine: "But though the Supreme Being is the undoubted origin of every determined train of causes, it by no means follows that nothing is in the power of the human will. For our wills themselves belong to those trains of causes which are definitively fixed and arranged in the Divine mind; and it is in that way that they become the causes of human actions. Our wills have just so much power as God willed and foreknew they should have; and consequently whatever be the precise degree of the power which they possess, that they absolutely must possess, and that they inevitably must exert; for both their powers and their operations were foreknown of God, whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived."*

These examples may be sufficient to convey some idea of the acuteness of the reasoning powers of Bradwardine, and the intelligent reader will be at no loss to understand in what manner the conclusions of this celebrated theologian bear upon certain controverted points in divinity, and particularly upon the Pelagian system! Our author closely follows the advocates of that heresy through all their intricate windings; and exposes their antichristian sophisms and subterfuges with infinite patience and address. Of course his subject leads him to examine and discuss, in a very copious manner, that most difficult of all inquiries, the nature of the human will, and of liberty and necessity. Large and instructive extracts might easily be produced on these points from his second book; but as they would detain us too long, it will be more expedient to take our leave of the treatise, after having selected a passage or two, which are more of a practical nature, and yet altogether related to the Pelagian dispute.

ON TEMPTATION.

The human will, without a supply of the special assistance of God, cannot conquer so much as a single temptation. And this special assistance Bradwardine expressly says is not freewill, but the UNCONQUERABLE will of God.

"Armed with this, his tempted children get the better

* Lib. i. cap. 28.

of every temptation ; destitute of this, they are constantly defeated. Besides, if a man could overcome temptation by his own power, it would be vain and idle in him to pray to God for victory over it, or to give him thanks for victory obtained." Lib. ii. cap. 5.

ON GRACE.

Every creature is indebted to Almighty God for various gifts ; and these gifts may with sufficient propriety be called the Grace of God, grace freely given. But, with very great thankfulness, we ought further to observe, that there is such a thing as a peculiar species of this free grace, which makes a man accepted of God, makes him a friend of God, and dear to him ; makes him his child for the present, and a partaker of his glory in heaven. Now, continues he, the mischievous Pelagians maintain that this sort of grace is not given freely by God, but is to be obtained by preceding merits. I myself was once so foolish and empty, when I first applied myself to the study of philosophy, as to be seduced by this error. For whenever I attended to the manner in which the divines handled this point, I own the Pelagian hypothesis appeared to me the more likely to be true. In the schools of the philosophers I rarely heard a single word said concerning grace, unless indeed sometimes an equivocal expression might drop from the disputants, but nothing further. Whereas my ears were assailed, the day through, with such assertions as, " We are the masters of our own free actions : It is in our own power to do well or ill, and to have virtues or vices." And when I heard those parts of the Scriptures read in the church, which extol the grace of God and lower the freewill of man, for example, " It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," and many similar passages, this doctrine of grace was very disagreeable to my ungrateful mind. But afterwards, when I reflected on the nature of the Divine character, on the knowledge of God, and his prescience, I began to perceive some few distant rays of light respecting this matter, even before I became a regular attendant on the lectures in divinity. I seemed to see, but by no means clearly, that the grace of God is prior, both in nature and in time, to any good actions that men can possibly perform ; and I return thanks to God, from whom proceeds every good thing, for thus freely enlightening

my understanding. St. Augustine confesses that he himself had been formerly in a similar mistake. "I was once," says he, "a Pelagian in my principles. I thought that faith towards God was not the gift of God, but that we procured it by our own powers, and that then, through the use of it, we obtained the gifts of God; I never supposed that the preventing grace of God was the proper cause of our faith, till my mind was struck in a particular manner by the apostle's argument and testimony,—What hast thou that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? My mind had been puffed up with worldly books, worldly wisdom, and worldly knowledge; but after my heart was visited with the influences of Divine grace, I grasped with the greatest eagerness the sacred writings which were dictated by the Holy Spirit; and above the rest, those of the apostle Paul. Then fell to the ground all my objections, and all the apparent contradictions in the Scriptures. The Bible spoke to my mind one simple language of pure truth, and with this additional praise of Divine grace constantly inculcated,—that no man should glory as though he had not received."—Bradwardine then proceeds to say,

In this whole business I follow the steps of Augustine as closely as I can, for he alone appears to me to be both the true apostolic logician and philosopher; and certainly he is very different from many learned doctors. The great point to be maintained is, that God gives his grace **FREELY** in the strictest sense of the word, and without merit on the part of man. For if God did not bestow his grace in this perfectly gratuitous manner, but on account of some subordinate contingent uncertain cause, he could not possibly foresee how he should bestow his free gifts. The word grace evidently implies that there is no antecedent merit: and in this way the apostle to the Romans appears to argue, when he says, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." All this is perfectly intelligible even in the conduct of liberal and magnificent **HUMAN** characters. They frequently bestow their gifts from a pure spirit of liberality, without the smallest previous claim on the score of merit. And shall not God, whose perfections are infinite, do more than this? St. Paul says, that God

commended his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us : and that when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. St. Paul was, in a peculiar manner a child of grace : with gratitude therefore he honours and extols its efficacy in all his epistles ; and particularly in his epistle to the Romans, throughout he defends his doctrines with great precision and copiousness. “ Every mouth,” says he, “ must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. By the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified : Men must be justified freely by his grace. By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Pelagius objects in the following manner ; If grace be perfectly free, and if all men be alike, why is grace given to this man and not to that ? Augustine, on a similar occasion, exposes the wildness of such reasoning thus : You might as well say, “ I am a man ; Christ was a man ; why am not I the same as He ? We have a common nature ; and with God there is no respect of persons : why then are his gifts so different ? Would any Christian, nay, would any madman argue so ? and yet the principles of Pelagius would carry us this length.” Again, the Pelagians produce such scriptures as these ; “ The Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him he will be found of you.”* “ Turn ye, . . . and I will turn unto you.”† From which they would infer, that the grace of God is proportioned to the merits of men. But all this would be to no purpose, if they would but compare one scripture with another : for example, “ Turn us, O God of our salvation ;‡ and after that I was turned, I repented :§ And, turn us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned.”|| Undoubtedly such expressions as, Turn yourselves, &c. relate to the free power which every man has to WILL ; but if Pelagius had half an eye, he might see that God, in giving the precept which directs us to turn unto him, influences also the human will, and excites it to action, not indeed in opposition to our free choice, but the reverse, as I have all along maintained. Hence it is written, Without me ye can do nothing. And again, I have laboured more abundantly than you all, yet not I but the grace of God within me. And lastly, I do not this

* 2 Chron. xv. 2.

† Zech. i. 3.

‡ Psalm lxxxv. 4.

§ Jer xxxi. 19.

|| Lam. v. 21.

for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; and I will cleanse you from your idols. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart, and will give you a heart of flesh. Lib. i. cap. 35.

LOVE, PATIENCE, HUMILITY, AND THANKSGIVING,

Are the subjects of the thirty-fourth chapter of the second book. And these are handled with great force and eloquence. A short specimen is given in page 76, &c. of this history. It may be worth while to subjoin a few sentences more, for the purpose of showing how steadily the author keeps his eye on the mischiefs of Pelagianism.

"I know," says he, "O Lord, I know, and with grief I relate, that there are certain proud Pelagians who choose rather to trust in themselves than in God. They think that if they have but freewill, and are the sole masters of their own actions, they are sufficiently safe, and have a good foundation for hope. O ye vain children of men, why will ye use a false balance? why will ye trust in yourselves, who are covered with sins, miseries, and defects, rather than in HIM, who is infinitely good and compassionate, and plenteous, in his inestimable donations? Why will ye not place your hopes on HIS happy government, who cannot err; and no longer on yourselves, who continually err and stray like lost sheep? Why rely on your own diminutive, infirm, and fragile powers; and not on his Almighty help, whose strength is boundless and irresistible? Beware of the prophet's curse, Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. "I am astonished," says St. Augustine, "that, notwithstanding the apostle declares, It is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure,—men can choose rather to rely on their own debility, than on the strength of the divine promise." But ye will tell me, that in regard to myself, the Divine promise is altogether uncertain. Be it so: What then? Can ye depend upon your own will so as to be assured of your future salvation? What, have ye no fears on that head? Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Since, then, there may be uncertainty in either way, why not place your faith, hope, and charity, where there is stability,

and good ground for dependence? Strange doctrine of the Pelagians! Tell men, say they, of the greatness of their own natural powers, and such preaching will excite them to virtue; but when ye inform them that nothing is to be done without the compassion, the help, and the grace of God, ye break their spirits, and drive them to despair. Thus have they that confidence in their own insignificant powers which all holy men have in the boundless mercy of God; and thus do the former declare war against those very free gifts of God, by the assistance of which the latter successfully fight against their innate corruptions. O Pelagians, how is it that ye, who fancy yourselves so acute, do not see the dilemma into which your opinions necessarily bring you? Either ye rob the Almighty of his prescience, or if ye admit that attribute, ye must, at the same time, admit the conclusiveness of this reasoning. Ye desire to have ground for hope; it is my prayer that ye should; but let your hope be in the Lord. For my part, it is good for me to draw near to God, and to put my trust in the Lord God. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is. It is this perfect confidence in God, which fortifies the mind of a good man against every species of adversity. He knows that God is most wise, just, and compassionate, and that HE never falls into error; and he knows also that all things work together for good to them that love God. He learns, therefore, with the apostles, and many other holy men, even to rejoice in sufferings.

A genuine love of God requires us to employ every faculty we possess, mental and corporeal, for the praise, honour, and glory of God; moreover, we ought freely to submit to every inconvenience and disadvantage, even to the irrecoverable loss of ourselves, rather than offend his Divine Majesty in the slightest degree.

Grant, I beseech thee, good Lord, that as I thus pronounce my duty with my lips, I may efficaciously perform the same, and persevere unto the end: and do Thou, I humbly beg, of thy great compassion, deign to accept this bounden service which thou hast prepared me to perform, as being the only recompense I can possibly make. More than this I neither have, nor ever shall have; unless, perhaps, it may be thought more, most earnestly to wish both to know and to do, under all circumstances, what is altogether agreeable to THY WILL. Grant that THIS also

may be my heart's desire ; and I humbly ask these things, as a poor, miserable, mendicant sinner. Is there any thing farther than this for which I can ask ? I do not see that there is, though I turn my thoughts every way : but if there be, I entreat thee, O Lord, with the most devout supplication, to answer my prayer in this respect also ; that so, for thy unspeakable benefits bestowed freely upon me, I may make the most grateful return in my power, and manifest the feelings of my heart by incessant thanksgiving.

St. Augustine, one of thy most grateful children, observes, That whether we would use our minds in contemplation, or our mouths in speaking, or our pens in writing, we cannot be better employed than in giving thanks to God. It is not easy to produce a sentiment more concise in the expression, more pleasant to the ear, more grateful to the understanding, or more useful in practice. The same author was, no doubt, taught by Thee to say, That there is true wisdom in the worship of God, which very materially consists in gratitude. Hence we are particularly admonished in the Communion Service “ to give thanks to our Lord God.” Let us therefore humbly acknowledge that every good thing we possess is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights ; and with our whole heart let us give thanks to our Lord God continually.

Bradwardine maintains the doctrine of a universal, decisive Providence ; and exposes the absurdity of the common language of mankind concerning Fortune.* He observes how often it is said in Scripture, that the Lord will put his fear into the hearts of the enemies of his people, will fight for his Church, will go before them, &c. He asserts, that God meant to show by these declarations,† that this is his general plan of government, which is always carried on by HIS energy, though that energy may be often invisible, or not accompanied with sensible miracles ; that the promises of divine support are specially applicable to spiritual conflicts ; as, in them more particularly, the Lord means to teach the impotent and the miserable where they should place their hope, and seek for strength, victory, and salvation. “ Let him,” says he, “ who likes not these things, hope in princes, trust in man, make flesh his arm, and in his heart depart from the Lord ; let him trust in his bow, let him fancy that his sword will save him ; and if he be

* Page 267.

† Page 277

successful, let him not return thanks, nor bless the Lord in hymns of grateful acknowledgment, because he owes, forsooth, no obligation to him : and I no way doubt, but though he call himself a Christian, he will pay less regard to the true God, than a Pagan does to an idol, to whom he offers sacrifice. But, let others hope as they please, it is good for me, in every conflict, to hold fast by God."

He makes an excellent practical use of his doctrine of Providence.* "He, who excludes from his creed the view of Divine Providence, disposing of all events, not permissively, but actually, removes, so far as in him lies, from every troubled person the greatest encouragement to patience, hope, consolation, and joy. Who will serenely bear adversity, if he believe it to proceed from chance, or ultimately from an enemy ; and if he do not know that it really proceeds from, and is guided by, the unerring direction of the all-wise God, who, by means invisible to human sight, purges sins, exercises virtues, and accumulates rewards ? He, doubtless, who does thus believe in Divine Providence, has every advantage for patience and composure of mind, because he knows that all things work together for his good. Thus rough places are made smooth to all the saints of God, hard things are softened, the edge of suffering is blunted, and bitter things are tempered sweetly : and thus a singular solace, a principal and a never-failing refreshment, in all adversities, is provided for me, a sinful worm. With what patience may all disagreeable events be endured by the man who fears and loves God ; and firmly believes that the great and wise Being, who can require nothing but what is wise and good, actually requires him to bear such things ! This, I think, is to make the Lord's yoke easy, and his burden light."

The maxims of Bradwardine induced him to conclude, that whatever things come to pass, are brought about by the Providence of God.† "Even a prudent master of a family," says he, "takes care of every thing that belongs to him, and makes provision beforehand, according to the best of his knowledge and power ; and leaves nothing unregulated in his house, but exactly appoints the due time and place for every thing."

I find ‡ that he agrees with the account, which has been given, concerning the author of the letter to Demetrius.§

* Page 288.

‡ Page 312.

† Lib. i. c. 27.

§ Vol. ii. p. 284.

For he shows, that Augustine, in his first book against Pelagius and Celestius, asserts that letter to be the work of Pelagius, quoting and arguing against a part of it in the plainest terms, and that nothing can be a more groundless surmise than to ascribe the Epistle in question to Jerom. He also goes over the same ground which Augustine had gone over before him, in confuting Pelagianism.

He largely refutes the error, more famous than any other in his day, namely, that men, by their works, deserve grace of congruity.* “By this it is,” says he, “that men rush headlong into Pelagianism. Not content with gratuitous grace, men would have grace to be sold by God, though at a very cheap rate.” He proves, that men are naturally destitute of the least spark of genuine love to God, without which it seems impossible that they should have any claim upon him in any sense whatever. He also † disapproves the error of those who contend, that grace is conferred on account of future merits foreseen.

He observes,‡ that Robert, bishop of Lincoln, (Grosseteste,) in his questions on the will of God, and in his other works, seems to favour Pelagianism, when he teaches, that the Supreme Being does never antecedently determine the free acts of the will, but that the will, in its own nature, possesses a self-determining power; and that the event may always be either compliance or non-compliance with those gracious influences by which God excites the mind to virtue.

The following is an extract of Bradwardine’s devout meditations on the subjects discussed in the Treatise:—

“O great and wonderful Lord, our God, thou only Light of the eyes! open, I implore thee, the eyes of my heart, and of others my fellow-creatures, that we may truly understand and contemplate thy wondrous works! And the more thoroughly we comprehend them, the more may our minds be affected, in the contemplation, with pious reverence and profound devotion! Who is not struck with awe in beholding thy all-powerful WILL, completely efficacious throughout every part of the creation? It is by this same sovereign and irresistible WILL, that whom, and when thou pleasest, thou bringest low and liftest up, killest and makest alive. How intense and how unbounded is thy love to me, O Lord! Whereas, my love, how feeble and remiss! My gratitude, how cold and inconstant!

* Page 325

† Page 363.

‡ Page 602, lib. ii.

Far be it from thee, that thy love should ever resemble mine; for in every kind of excellence thou art consummate. O thou, who fillest heaven and earth, why fillest thou not this narrow heart? O human soul, low, abject, and miserable, whoever thou art, if thou be not fully replenished with the love of so great a Good, why dost thou not open all thy doors, expand all thy folds, extend all thy capacity, that, by the sweetness of love so great, thou mayest be wholly occupied, satiated, and ravished; especially, since, little as thou art, thou canst not be satisfied with the love of any Good inferior to the ONE SUPREME? Speak the word, that thou mayest become my God and most amiable in mine eyes, and it shall instantly be so, without the possibility of failure. What can be more efficacious to engage the affections, than preventing love? Most gracious Lord! by thy love thou hast prevented me, wretch that I am, who had no love for thee, but was at enmity with my Maker and Redeemer. I see, Lord, that it is easy to say and to write these things, but very difficult to execute them. Do thou, therefore, to whom nothing is difficult, grant, that I may more easily practise these things with my heart, than utter them with my lips: open thy liberal hand, that nothing may be easier, sweeter, or more delightful to me, than to be employed in these things. Thou, who preventest thy servants with thy gracious love, whom dost not thou elevate with the hope of finding thee? And, what canst thou deny to him who loves thee, who is in need, and who supplicates thy aid? Permit me, I pray, to reason with thy magnificent goodness, that my hopes may be enlarged. It is not the manner, even of human friendship, to reject a needy friend, especially when the ability to relieve is abundant.

“Why do we fear to preach the doctrine of the predestination of saints, and of the genuine grace of God? Is there any cause to dread, lest man should be induced to despair of his condition, when his hope is demonstrated to be founded on God alone? Is there not much stronger reason for him to despair, if, in pride and unbelief, he founds his hope of salvation on himself?”

Such were the ardent breathings of soul in a studious and thoughtful scholar of the fourteenth century; who, unaided by human connections, in an age dreary and unpromising throughout Europe, and in our own island full of darkness, seems to have lived the life of faith on the

Son of God. The light of the Waldensian doctrine had been all along confined to the Continent. But HE, who shows mercy, because he will show mercy, and who had, in some measure, paved the way to the more copious exhibition of his grace by the life and writings of Bradwardine, was preparing, not long after his decease, to revive the light of Divine truth in England, and there to form a people for himself, who should show forth his praise.

CHAP. III.

JOHN WICKLIFF.*

I. HIS LIFE.

II. HIS RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS.

III. REFLECTIONS ON HIS CHARACTER.

IV. FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE PANEGYRIC AND CALUMNY WITH WHICH HE HAS BEEN TREATED BY HISTORIANS AND BIOGRAPHERS.

V. ADDITIONAL EXTRACTS FROM HIS WRITINGS.

I. THE LIFE OF WICKLIFF.

THE papal advocates ascribe the progress of Wickliff's opinions to several circumstances :—1st. The decrepit age of Edward III., and the infancy of his successor, Richard ; 2nd. The charms of novelty ; 3rd. The enmity of the duke of Lancaster against the clergy ; and, lastly, The wicked and intolerable despotism of the Roman See, manifested by its multiplied exactions, and corrupt collations to ecclesiastical benefices.

The more moderate of the Romanists have not been backward in acknowledging, in strong terms, the various abuses and usurpations of the papacy. These, in fact, about the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had arisen to their greatest height ; and Wickliff, without doubt, is one

* Many of the observations upon Wickliff's character, which are given in the work from whence these pages have been principally derived, are omitted in the following account of that Reformer, as there does not appear sufficient ground for opposing the estimate of his character usually given by protestant historians.

of the first who dared to call in question the foundation of the tyrannical domination of the clergy.

In regard to the success of this Reformer be it admitted, that a variety of secondary causes contributed to the gradual deliverance of the nation ; be it admitted, that among these a principal one was the excessive odium under which the hierarchy laboured at that time ; yet the pious student of history will not, on these accounts, be less disposed to see the hand of Providence, in bestowing on our forefathers the blessings of Christian light and liberty. Strange indeed would it be to reject the idea of a Divine influence, because at the moment when it was most wanted, at the crisis when men's patience was almost exhausted by the cruel and scandalous practices of their spiritual rulers, it pleased God to raise up a man of sincere love for the truth, of a hardy temper, and of a penetrating judgment, who was both able and willing to fight the good fight, and powerfully to withstand the numerous enormities then prevalent in the Church.

WICKLIFF was born about the year 1324, at a village near Richmond in Yorkshire. He was admitted a student at Queen's college, Oxford, but soon removed to Merton college, which was at that time esteemed one of the most famous seminaries of learning in Europe. In the long list of men of note and eminence belonging to this college, we observe the names of William Occham, called the Venerable Inceptor ; and of Thomas Bradwardine, called the Profound Doctor.

Our renowned Reformer soon became master of all the niceties of the school-divinity. He seems to have reigned without a rival in the public disputations, which were then in high repute. The Aristotelian logic was at its height ;*

* The Scholastic divinity pretended to discuss and settle all questions in theology in a rational and argumentative manner. Like Plato's school, it has had several ages or periods : the ANCIENT, the MIDDLE, and the NEW.

The Ancient began under Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, or rather under Abelard, and his disciple Peter Lombard, called the Master of the Sentences, on account of his work of Sentences, which appeared in 1172 ; it preserved its credit nearly one hundred years.

The Middle may be reckoned to commence early in the thirteenth century, under Albertus Magnus, a learned Dominican, who published twenty-one volumes, in folio, at Lyons. These contain chiefly long commentaries on Aristotle ; and though they treat every thing in a logical way, are of little real use but to fill large libraries. The famous Thomas Aquinas was the disciple of Albertus, and read lectures on the book of Sentences. During this period, the Peripatetic

and Wickliff, in opposing error made use of the same weapons which his adversaries employed in maintaining it. Such were his labours on the week-days, proving to the learned the doctrine concerning which he intended to preach; and on the Sundays he addressed the common people on the points which he had proved before. He always descended to particulars: he attacked the vices of the friars, and many of the prevailing abuses in religion. On the question of the real presence in the Eucharist, Wickliff has been considered as remarkably clear; but in this matter the reader will be better enabled to judge for himself, when certain authentic documents, tending to elucidate this early Reformer's opinion of the nature of the Sacrament, shall have been submitted to his consideration.

Wickliff's defence of the university of Oxford, against the encroachments of the Mendicant friars, seems to have been one of the first things which brought him into public notice.

This religious order not only pretended to a distinct jurisdiction from that of the university, but took every opportunity of enticing the students into their convents, insomuch that parents feared to send their children to the respective colleges, lest they should be kidnapped by the friars. We are informed that, owing to this cause, the number of students, from having been thirty thousand, was reduced to about six thousand, in the year 1357.

The zeal and ability of Wickliff, who possessed a judgment enlightened by divine truth, manifested itself on this occasion. He composed and published several spirited treatises, AGAINST ABLE BEGGARY, AGAINST IDLE BEGGARY, and ON THE POVERTY OF CHRIST. The consequence of these laudable exertions was his advancement to the

philosophy was raised to its utmost reputation. The works of Aquinas have gone through several editions, in seventeen volumes folio. The author died in 1274.

The New, or third age of school-divinity, begins with Durandus de St. Pourçain, who wrote commentaries on the four books of Sentences, combated the opinions of Thomas Aquinas, and is said to have displayed great wit and genius. Indeed, after the time of Aquinas, the scholastic disputes grew more and more subtle, and the whole attention of the disputants was employed on the most frivolous questions. They often contended with great heat about mere formalities, and even raised phantoms in their imaginations for the purpose of continuing disputes, and opposition of sentiment. Durandus died bishop of Meaux in 1333.—School divinity is now fallen into the lowest contempt.

mastership of Baliol college; and four years after he was chosen warden of Canterbury hall.

From this office he was ejected, with circumstances of great injustice, by Langham, archbishop of Canterbury. Wickliff appealed to the pope, who for the space of three years artfully suspended his decision. In the mean time, Wickliff, regardless of consequences, continued his attacks on the insatiable ambition, tyranny, and avarice of the ruling ecclesiastics, as also on the idleness, debauchery, and hypocrisy of the friars. These things were not done in a corner or by halves; nor did there want informers to carry the news to Rome. Accordingly, nobody was surprised to hear of the confirmation of the ejection of so obnoxious a person as Wickliff. The pope's definitive sentence to that effect arrived at Oxford in 1370, to the great satisfaction of all the monastic orders, whose dignity and interest were intimately connected with the question of Wickliff's right to hold this office.

After this, the fame of Wickliff became less confined to the university of Oxford, although the opinion entertained of him by that body was fully evinced by his being elected Professor of Divinity. Almost every where he was looked upon as the defender of truth and liberty. The pope and his cardinals feared him, and minutely observed his proceedings; and on the other hand, we find that the first parliament of England held under king Richard II., entertained so high an opinion of his integrity and knowledge, that in a case of the utmost emergency, and on a very nice and delicate question, they applied to him for the sanction of his judgment and authority. The question was, "Whether, for the defence of the kingdom, that treasure which the lord pope demanded on pain of censures, might not be lawfully detained." The affirmative answer of Wickliff was probably foreseen; but still the application of the king and parliament to a man who had been persecuted by the pope and the archbishop of Canterbury, proves beyond contradiction the high estimation in which he was held. It proves also, that, though deprived of his wardenship, and surrounded by exasperated friars, and narrowly watched by the rulers of the church, he must have been supported at this time by numerous friends of the greatest weight and consequence. It could not therefore easily happen, that a man in the prominent situation of Wickliff should remain long without a maintenance.

Accordingly, it appears, that in 1374 he was presented by Edward III. to the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, and afterwards, in 1375, was confirmed in the prebend of Auste in the collegiate church of Westbury. The duke of Lancaster is supposed to have been the chief friend of Wickliff, in obtaining for him the royal patronage. Many persons, indeed, considered the reformer as in the high road to some dignified preferment; but there is no account of any such offer being made to him. He had previously been employed by the king, with six other divines, on an embassy to the continent, to confer with the agents of the pope, on the grasping proceedings of the see of Rome, which still persisted in bestowing the English benefices on Italians and other aliens.

Wickliff now had many admirers, some powerful friends, and a host of bitter enemies. He was profoundly learned; uncommonly eloquent; and, to complete the character, he was inflamed with a zeal for truth: he abhorred hypocrisy, was hostile to every species of vice, and was himself a man of unexceptionable morals. This was precisely the man who would be likely to fall without mercy on proud popes and idle friars.

The following is a short specimen of the manner in which Wickliff sometimes treated the pope. He called him ANTICHRIST, the proud worldly priest of Rome, and the most cursed of clippers and purse-kervers (cutters). He averred, that the pope and his collectors drew out of the land poor men's livelihood, to the amount of many thousand marks a year: and added, that even if the realm had a huge hill of gold in it, and no other man took part thereof except this proud worldly priest's collector, yet in process of time this hill would be levelled. The conduct of the pope's commissioners in the negotiation already noticed, with the opportunities for personal observation which he enjoyed while on the continent, had plainly shown Wickliff the true character of the popish church.*

His attacks on the friars are as frequent as they are just. They draw, said he, children from Christ's religion by hypocrisy; they tell them that men of their order shall never go to hell. They praise their own rotten habit more than the worshipful body of our Lord Jesus Christ. They teach lords and ladies, that if they die in Francis's habit,

* Wickliff also at this time maintained, that the Eucharist after consecration was not the real body of Christ, but only a sign of it.

the virtue of it will preserve them from hell. St. Paul laboured with his own hands ; and it is the commandment of Christ, to give alms to poor, feeble, crooked, blind, and bed-ridden men ; but it is leaving this commandment, to give alms to such hypocrites as the begging friars, who feign themselves holy and needy, when in fact they are strong in body, and possess overmuch riches, as well as great houses, precious clothes, jewels and other valuable things.

It was not likely that the Romish clergy would tamely endure attacks of this kind. They forthwith selected, from Wickliff's public lectures and sermons, nineteen articles of complaint and accusation, and despatched them to Rome

The pope was so completely alive to the business, that he sent no fewer than five bulls to England on this occasion ! Three of them were directed to the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London. In the first, he orders these prelates to apprehend the rector of Lutterworth, and imprison him, provided they found him guilty of the heresy with which he was charged. In the second, he enjoins them, if they cannot find him, to fix up public citations in Oxford, and in other places, for his personal appearance before the pope within the space of three months. In the third, he commands them to acquaint the king and his sons with the heresy of Wickliff, and to require their assistance for its effectual extirpation.

The fourth bull was addressed to the king himself, desiring his royal help and patronage in the prosecution of the heretic. And lastly, a fifth was despatched to the university of Oxford ; in which the pope laments the sloth and laziness of the chancellor and heads of the university, in permitting tares to spring up among the pure wheat. Wickliff's doctrines, he said, would subvert both church and state. They ought to forbid the preaching of such tenets, and assist the bishops in their endeavours to bring the offender to punishment.

It is not too much to say, that, both by the university of Oxford, and by the government of the country, these bulls were treated with the utmost contempt. The university for a long time were disposed wholly to reject the pontifical injunctions with disdain ; and when after much deliberation they had received the bull, they refused to be active in giving to it the smallest degree of effect.

The regency and parliament of England manifested their disapprobation of the persecution of Wickliff, in a manner

which must have mortified the haughty pontiff exceedingly. For it was at this moment that they chose to honour this celebrated reformer with their confidence.

The archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London, however, did not hesitate to execute the pope's commands. They cited Wickliff to appear before them at St. Paul's in London, on the thirtieth day after the notice ; and this interval of a month was by him wisely employed in taking precautions for his safety. To be brief, he saw no way of evading the present storm of persecution, but by putting himself at once under the protection of the duke of Lancaster, who had long known him, and entertained a high opinion of his learning and integrity, and who was no great admirer either of the monks or of the prelates. -

This duke, well known by the name of John of Gaunt, not only advised Wickliff to obey the citation ; but also in person, together with Henry Percy, lord marshal of England, accompanied him to St. Paul's. Sudbury the archbishop was a moderate man, for the times in which he lived ; but Courtney, the bishop of London, was an intemperate bigot, and conducted himself in such a manner as induced the duke to declare, that rather than take at his hands what the bishop had said to him, he would drag him by the hair of his head out of the church. The bystanders heard these words, and a disturbance ensued, the Londoners crying aloud, " they would rather lose their lives than suffer their bishop to be so contemptuously treated." In justice to the reformer it should be stated, that he took no part in this altercation. The court broke up in tumult and confusion, after hastily forbidding Wickliff to preach or write any more in defence of his doctrines.

Some of the opinions which brought upon Wickliff the indignation of the hierarchy, are allowed by Walsingham, who always strongly supports the cause of popery, to have been,—“ that the church of Rome was not the head of other churches,—that St. Peter was not superior to the other Apostles ;—and that the pope, in the power of the keys, was only equal to a common priest.” These were undoubtedly the sentiments of genuine protestantism. What he is said to have further asserted, namely, that temporal lords and patrons had a right to deprive that church of her emoluments, in case of misbehaviour, was a sentiment expressed in too indefinite a manner to be made matter of serious accusation.

Wickliff having escaped, in the manner that has been mentioned, those severities which his persecutors, the pope and prelates, had no doubt intended to inflict, paid little regard to the strict charge which they are said to have given him, to be silent in future respecting all the subjects which had given so much offence. He continued in the year 1377, during the minority of Richard the Second, to preach and instruct the people with unabated zeal and courage.*

This perseverance in the good cause induced the English prelates, now encouraged by the decline of the duke of Lancaster's power, after the death of king Edward III., to make another attempt at carrying into execution the tyrannical designs of the Roman pontiff.

Wickliff was not disobedient to their second citation; for in 1378 we find him before the same papal delegates, assembled on the present occasion, not in St. Paul's, but in the more private archiepiscopal chapel at Lambeth. However, many of the citizens of London, who revered Wickliff, forced themselves, together with a multitude of common people, into the chapel, where they spoke in behalf of the prisoner, and his judges were afraid to proceed. Moreover, the mother of the king, who was widow of the Black Prince, ordered Sir L. Clifford to go and peremptorily forbid them to proceed to any definitive sentence. Here the papal historian, Walsingham, loses all patience. "The bishops," says he, "who had professed themselves determined to do their duty in spite of threats or promises, and even at the hazard of their lives, became so intimidated during the examination of the apostate, that their speeches were as soft as oil, to the public loss of their dignity, and the damage of the whole Church. And when Clifford pompously delivered his message, they were so overcome with fear, that you would have thought them to be as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.† Thus," continues the historian, "this false teacher, this complete hypocrite, evaded the hand of justice; and could no more be called before the same prelates, because

* Fox, p. 491.

† Fuller's observation on this event is as follows:—The bishops were struck with a panic fear. . . . And the person of this John Wickliff was saved, as was once the doctrine of his GODLY namesake; "THEY FEARED THE PEOPLE, FOR ALL MEN COUNTED JOHN THAT HE WAS A PROPHET INDEED." Mark xi. 32.

their commission expired by the death of the pope Gregory XI."

It is also proper to state that our reformer, though evidently still protected by his friends, did not rest his safety entirely on their authority and interference. He delivered in to the court a solemn protest, and an explanatory qualification of several of his positions which had been deemed erroneous or heretical.

His explanations and defence, while thus opposed, do not appear to be the most clear and suitable for the occasion ; but as we are not perfectly in possession of the facts of the case, it is impossible for us to form a complete and correct opinion of Wickliff's conduct.

From a concise account of the writings and public lectures of Wickliff, which we purpose to lay before the reader, it will distinctly appear in what manner he combated the doctrine of transubstantiation. At the end of one of his English Confessions of the Sacrament of the Altar, he declared, that one-third of the clergy were on his side, and would support him at the hazard of their lives. He was condemned by the university, for holding heretical opinions in this matter ; and, from the Vice-chancellor's decree,* Wickliff's Confessions, and other documents, we may form some judgment, though by no means a decisive one, what those opinions really were. It should however be remarked, that instead of appointing any one to meet and argue the subject openly with Wickliff, the Vice-chancellor induced twelve doctors to join with him in condemning the doctrines of the Reformer, and threatened all members of the university, who dared to favour these tenets, with severe penalties. Our Reformer has been charged with explaining and qualifying his meaning, in an artful manner, after he had appealed to the secular arm in vain : but here again the reader must determine for himself how far the accusation is well founded. It is certain that his powerful patron, the duke of Lancaster, deserted him on this occasion, and advised him to submit to his ecclesiastical judges ; influenced, it is said, by his dread of the strength

* Romish historians have accused Wickliff of supporting the seditious practices of Tyler, Straw, and the other incendiaries in the time of Richard II. There is no evidence, however, that Wickliff ever patronised these men. See Fuller, Church History, B. iv. There can be no doubt that his enemies would have rejoiced to involve him in the charges against them, had there been any pretext for so doing.

of the hierarchy, as well as by scruples of conscience. Or rather because the duke's opposition to the papacy proceeded from temporal, and not from spiritual motives.

In effect, the duke of Lancaster, who had countenanced Wickliff in his opposition to papal usurpation, did not approve his sentiments respecting the received doctrine of the real presence ; and he is said to have enjoined silence to the reformer on that head. However, soon after this, Wickliff published an equivocal sort of Confession, which by his enemies has been termed a retractation.

After the last-mentioned conflict with the university of Oxford, Wickliff appears to have been, in the main, delivered from persecution ; although, as we shall presently see, the Romish ecclesiastics persisted in their proceedings against him. He certainly continued to the end of his days, in the unremitted exercise of zealous pastoral labours in his parish church of Lutterworth. He also persevered in attacking the abuses of popery by his writings against the mendicants, against transubstantiation, and against indulgences ; and produced A TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE FROM THE LATIN INTO THE ENGLISH TONGUE. This work alone sufficed to render his name dear to every Christian. The value of it was unspeakable ; and his unwearied pains in propagating the genuine doctrines of revelation among mankind, indicated the steady zeal with which he was endowed ; while the rage, with which the hierarchy was inflamed against a work so undeniably seasonable, demonstrated that the ecclesiastical rulers hated the light, and would not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.

Sincere Christians, and more particularly the protestants of all succeeding ages, are bound thankfully to acknowledge the Divine goodness, that such a person was providentially raised up at the very time he was so much wanted ; and, that from his labours unspeakable benefit accrued to the Church of Christ, both in England and upon the Continent.*

There remain a few more particulars relative to Wickliff, which should be detailed previously to our proceeding to notice his writings more particularly.

The prodigious exertions of Wickliff, and the harassing persecutions he endured in 1378, are said to have been the occasion of a dangerous fit of sickness, which brought him

* A Bohemian gentleman, who studied at Oxford, carried Wickliff's books into Bohemia. The effects of his writings soon appeared.

almost to the point of death in the beginning of the year 1379. The mendicant friars hearing of this, immediately selected a committee of grave doctors, and instructed them in what they were to say to the sick man who had so grievously offended them. And, that the message might be the more solemn, they joined with them four of the most respectable citizens, whom they termed Aldermen of the Wards. These commissioners found Wickliff lying in his bed; and they are said first of all to have wished him health, and a recovery from his distemper. After some time they put him in mind of the many and great injuries which he had done to the begging friars by his sermons and writings, and exhorted him, that as he had now a very little time to live, he would, like a true penitent, bewail and revoke, in their presence, whatever things he had said to their disparagement. But Dr. Wickliff, immediately recovering strength, called his servants to him, and ordered them to raise him a little on his pillows. Which, when they had done, he said with a loud voice, "I SHALL NOT DIE, BUT LIVE AND DECLARE THE EVIL DEEDS OF THE FRIARS." On which the doctors, and the other deputies, departed from him in no little confusion.*

Simon Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in the insurrection of Wat Tyler; and was succeeded in the primacy by William Courtney,† who had always shown himself one of Wickliff's most active adversaries. The new bishop highly approved of the proceedings of the university of Oxford, already mentioned; and he determined to use all the authority of his high office to crush Wickliff and his followers. He was not duly invested with the consecrated pall from Rome, till the sixth of May, 1382; and on the seventeenth of the same month he called together a court of select bishops and doctors.

The memorandum‡ in the archbishop's register states, that the court having met in the monastery of the friars preachers, certain conclusions, repugnant to the determinations of the Church, were laid before them; and that, after good deliberation, they met again, and pronounced ten of the conclusions heretical, and fourteen erroneous and repugnant to the Church.

It does not appear by the records that Wickliff himself was cited to appear before the archbishop; only the names

* Bile, Appendix, p. 469

† A. D. 1381.

‡ Wilkins, vol. iii. p. 157.

of a few persons who espoused his opinions are mentioned. Wickliff is said to have claimed the privilege of being exempted from episcopal jurisdiction, on the ground of being a member of the university, and holding an office therein.

There cannot be the smallest doubt that these proceedings were levelled chiefly at the obnoxious reformer. But till with my own eyes I read the seventh heretical article in the page above referred to in Wilkins's *Concilia*, I could scarcely believe it possible that one of the charges against either Wickliff or his followers should be, that he had asserted, *Deus debet obedire diabolo*, "God ought to obey the devil." This single fact shows to what a length calumny and credulity may go, when men are heated by passion and prejudice!

However, such violence and misrepresentation served but in the end to promote the cause of truth. Wickliff defended his opinions with spirit, took particular notice of this charge, and gained many new friends. "Such things," says he, "do they invent of catholic men, that they may blacken their reputation, as if they held this impious opinion, that God is a devil; or any other open heretical tenet; and they are prepared, by false and slanderous witnesses, to fix such heresies on good men as if they had invented them.*

An extraordinary, but well-authenticated circumstance, proves the ability and address of Courtney. At the instant when the extracts from the writings of Wickliff were produced, and the court was going to enter upon business, on the seventeenth of May, a violent earthquake shook the monastery. The affrighted bishops and doctors threw down their papers, and cried out, "The business is displeasing to God." The firm and intrepid archbishop coolly and quietly chided their superstitious fears; and with great promptitude gave the matter a different turn: "If this earthquake," said he, "means any thing, it portends the downfall of heresy. For as noxious vapours are confined in the bowels of the earth, and are expelled by these violent concussions, so, through our strenuous endeavours, the kingdom must be purified from the pestilential opinions of reprobate men. But this is not to be done without great commotion."†

Wickliff, in his writings, alludes to this accident, calling it the council of the herydene, which is the old English word for earthquake.

* MS. Bodl. † MS. Bodl. and Chron. Mon. Alban.

When the archbishop and his court had condemned Wickliff's doctrines, and had finished the business for which they had met together, a sermon was preached at the church of the grey friars by John Cunningham, a distinguished adversary of Wickliff. At this sermon we are told there was present, among others, a knight named Cornelius Cloune, who was a great favourer of the Conclusions then condemned, and one of those who held and taught them; nor would he believe otherwise of the sacrament than that real and true bread was present, according to Wickliff's opinion.

The popish legend then tells us that the next day, being the vigil of the holy trinity, the knight went to the same convent to hear mass. Behold! at the breaking of the host, upon casting his eye towards the friar who happened to celebrate mass, he saw in his hands very flesh, raw and bloody, and divided into three parts. Full of wonder and amazement, he called his squire, that he might see it; but the squire saw nothing more than usual. Moreover, in the middle of the third piece, which was to be put into the chalice, the knight saw this name, JESUS, written in letters of flesh, all raw and bloody; which was very wonderful to behold. On the next day, namely, the feast of the holy trinity, the same friar, preaching at Paul's Cross, told this story to all the people, and the knight attested the truth of it, and promised that he would fight and die in that cause; for that, in the sacrament of the altar, there was the very body of Christ, and not bread only, as he had formerly believed!*

Such were the lying artifices of those who, at that time, zealously defended the popish doctrines.

At length, archbishop Courtney, finding that neither the strong measures which had been taken at Oxford, nor his own subsequent proceedings at the earthquake council, availed to the silencing of the audacious heretic, devised the following expedients, which enabled him at least to rid the university of the man whose person had hitherto been sheltered under academical immunities.

1. He obtained the king's patent, empowering the archbishop and his suffragans to arrest and imprison all persons who privately or publicly should maintain the heresies in question.

2. He also obtained the king's patent, directed to the chancellor and proctors at Oxford, appointing them inqui-

* Knyghton, de Event. Angl. 2651.

sitors-general, and ordering them to banish and expel from the university and town of Oxford all who were advocates of Wickliff's heresies, and even all who should dare to receive into their inns or houses Wickliff himself, or any other of his friends, suspected of the like.*

From this storm Wickliff thought proper to retire, and the haughty archbishop had the satisfaction of seeing the man he so much disliked, compelled to retreat before his power to Lutterworth, an obscure part of the kingdom.

Soon after his removal to his parsonage, he was seized with the palsy, from which, however, he recovered so as to resume his studies and pastoral exertions. It was, I believe, on the 28th of December, 1384, when he was attending divine service in his church at Lutterworth, that he was attacked by a second and fatal stroke of the palsy. His tongue, in particular, was so much affected that he never spoke again.

The bigoted papists gloried in his death; and one of them has insulted his memory unmercifully: "It was reported," says Walsingham, "that he had prepared accusations and blasphemies which he had intended, on the day he was taken ill, to have uttered in his pulpit against Thomas à Becket, the saint and martyr of the day; but by the judgment of God he was suddenly struck, and the palsy seized his limbs; and that mouth, which was to have spoken huge things against God and his saint, and the holy church, was miserably drawn aside, and afforded a frightful spectacle to the beholders. His tongue was speechless, and his head shook, showing plainly that the curse of God was upon him."†

The reader will be beforehand with me in any remarks I could make on this malevolent account.

It was in the year 1415 that the council of Constance declared that Wickliff had died an obstinate heretic; and ordered his bones, if they could be distinguished from the bones of the faithful, to be dug up and thrown upon a dunghill. This sentence was not executed till thirteen years after, when orders for that purpose were sent by pope Martin V. to R. Fleming, bishop of Lincoln and diocesan of Lutterworth. Accordingly, the bishop's officers took the

* Wilkins, vol. iii. p. 156 and 166.

† The Tynmouth Chronicle and Walsingham say, that it was the day after, 29th December, being the feast of St. Thomas à Becket, whom the Romish church style a saint and a martyr.

bones out of the grave, where they had lain undisturbed forty-four years, burnt them, and cast the remaining ashes into an adjoining brook, in the year 1528.

Fuller observes, "They burnt his bones to ashes and cast them into the Swift, a neighbouring brook running hard by. Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into the Avon, the Avon into the Severn, the Severn into the narrow seas; they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wickliff are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over." The number of his volumes committed to the flames by order of Subinco,* archbishop of Prague, amounted to about two hundred. His labours, indeed, appear to have been immense; and, beyond all doubt, he was in that dark age a prodigy of knowledge.

After having observed that his works were burned at Oxford, it is proper to add, that previously both to this, and also to the burning of his bones by order of the council of Constance, a testimonial was publicly given, by the university of Oxford, to his character, dated in the year 1406, which declares,† "That all his conduct through life was sincere and commendable; that his conversation from his youth upward, to the time of his death, was so praiseworthy and honest, that never at any time was there a particle of suspicion raised against him; and that he vanquished, by the force of the Scriptures, all such as slandered Christ's religion. God forbid that our prelates should condemn such a man as a heretic, who has written better than any others in the university, on logic, philosophy, divinity, morality, and the speculative arts."‡ This honourable testimony shows that any speculative errors of Wickliff were not attended with practical consequences, and that sedition was never encouraged by that Reformer; even if it were allowed that the enormities of the age induced him somewhat to exceed what we might term the bounds of discretion in his attempts to oppose them.

* Fox, p. 509.

† Ib. p. 515.

‡ The authenticity of this testimonial has been doubted; and we are told that no trace of it is to be found among the letters and registers of the university of Oxford.—There is, however, sufficient evidence that it is not spurious. Great liberties, in those violent times, were frequently taken with registers and other documents. For example, the institution of Wickliff to the rectory of Lutterworth, is not to be found in the registers of the bishops of the diocese.—Lewis, 191. *Antiq. Ox.* 203.

II.

THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS OF WICKLIFF.

The distinguishing tenet of Wickliff, in religion, was, undoubtedly, the election of grace. He calls the church an assembly of predestinated persons. To those, who said that God did not every thing for them, but that their own merits contributed in part to salvation, he replied with a short prayer. "Heal us gratis, O Lord." Those who have diligently studied the sacred volumes, and also the writings of truly pious Christians, will understand how evangelically humble this reformer might be in the use of such doctrine, and at the same time, how sincerely laborious in inculcating whatever belongs to genuine piety and virtue, in opposition to the pharisaic superstitions of the times. And if any one be inclined to doubt this, let him remember that the doctrine of the Scriptures as embodied in the authentic declarations of faith of all the reformed protestant churches, shows that we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Saviour, by faith, and not for our own works and deservings; and yet no sound divine conceives that, for this reason, any man is released from the duty of obeying God's commandments, and of abounding in all the fruits of a pure and evangelical faith. But let us proceed in our endeavours to collect the doctrines of Wickliff from his writings and other authentic documents.

1. In one of his treatises against the mendicant friars, called "The Complaint of John Wickliff to the King and Parliament,"* he gives it as his opinion, that "if ministers, in the execution of their office, do not act, both by word and example, as God commandeth, their people are not bound to pay them tithes and offerings."

He also states it as his opinion, that "when the principal cause for which tithes and offerings should be paid does not exist, the payment of tithes should cease. Also clergymen are more to be condemned for withdrawing their teaching in word and in example, than the parishioners

* N. B. Though several of the quotations which follow are marked with inverted commas, for the sake of distinction, they are to be understood as only containing the substance of Wickliff's sentiments, and not his very words.—The originals are frequently in Latin, and often in such antiquated English as would be unintelligible to ordinary readers.

are for withdrawing tithes and offerings, even though they discharge their office as they ought."

This last observation presents us with an unsuitable comparison between two species of transgression, and the opinions of the reformer upon this head have been much censured.*

2. In the sixteenth chapter of another treatise against the orders of friars, he directly charges them with perverting the right faith of the sacrament of the altar. He thus states his own opinions: "Christ says, that the bread, which he brake and blessed, is his body; and the Scripture says openly, that the sacrament is bread that we break and God's body: but the friars say, 'It is an accident without subject,' and therefore nothing; neither bread, nor God's body. Augustine says, 'What we see, is bread, but to those, who are faithfully taught, the bread is Christ's body.† Why should our Almighty Saviour conceal this notion of the friars for a thousand years; and never teach the doctrine to his apostles, or to so many saints; but at length communicate it to these hypocrites?'"

3. In his public lectures, which he read, as professor of divinity at Oxford, in the summer of 1381,‡ Wickliff appears to have opposed the papistical doctrine of transubstantiation with all his might; and at the same time to have maintained the true, ancient, and scriptural notion of the Lord's Supper. With this view he published sixteen Conclusions, the first of which is expressed in these words: "The consecrated host, which we see upon the

* These opinions of Wickliff were made a ground of accusation in "the Conclusions" exhibited against him in the Council at Lambeth, as well as on other occasions. The 16th article accused him of maintaining, that "it is lawful for princes and kings, (in cases by law limited,) to withdraw temporal commodities from churchmen who abuse the same habitually." In his exposition, or reply, he thus explains his opinion: "Sometime it were a necessary work of spiritual alms to chastise such clerks by taking from them their temporal livings, who use to abuse the same to the damnifying both of their soul and body." The extract given in the text contains a more unguarded and extended statement; but do not the Romish conclusions show us clearly, that the real ground of offence was his views concerning the temporal power and wealth of the church of Rome, on which points she is most sensitive; and this fully accounts for the obloquy heaped upon him by her historians. Dr. James states, that the views of Wickliff on this subject were influenced by the opinions of some lawyers, who held that tithes were not due to any particular church, so that they were really bestowed for the support of God's ministers. See *his Apology*, p. 52.

† Quodammodo, or after a certain manner, viz. spiritually. ED.

‡ Hist. and Antiq. Oxon. A. D. 1381.

altar, is neither Christ nor any part of him, but an effectual sign of him." And he offered to defend this and his other conclusions in public disputation with any one. But he was prohibited by the rulers of the university and doctors of divinity. Upon which Wickliff published a defence* of his doctrine, which the intelligent reader will think less satisfactory than the above-mentioned Conclusion. "The eucharist," says he, "is the body of Christ in the form of bread. The right faith of Christian men is this, that this worshipful sacrament is bread and Christ's body, as Jesus Christ is very God and very man."

4. In his Trialogus,† he tells us, "that though the bread in the eucharist begins to be the body of Christ, by virtue of the consecration, it must not be believed that it ceases to be bread. It is plain it is SUBSTANTIALLY bread, because it begins to be SACRAMENTALLY the body of Christ. So Christ says, This is my body. The nature of bread is not thenceforth destroyed, but is exalted into a substance of greater dignity. In a similar way John the Baptist was made Elias, by virtue of Christ's words in the eleventh of St. Matthew, yet he did not cease to be John. And St. Austin observes, that the Scripture does not say that seven ears of corn and seven fat kine SIGNIFY seven years of plenty, but that they ARE those years. Such expressions denote that the subject is ordained of God to FIGURE the thing predicated according to its fitness. And in the same sense and manner the sacramental bread is specially the body of Christ."—Wickliff very modestly concludes this explanation, with declaring, "that he was ready to believe a more subtile sense, if he could be convinced of the truth of it by Scripture or reason."

We have observed above, that Wickliff, in the matter of transubstantiation, appears both to have opposed the papistical opinion, and also to have maintained the true doctrine; but the discerning reader cannot fail to remark, that authentic documents leave his sentiments on the former in much less doubt than they do on the latter. A want of consistency, at least on this head, is but too evident in the language of our Reformer, as in many other writers on this subject.

The circumstances which attended his condemnation by the university of Oxford, were these: the vice-chancellor, after reciting, before several doctors in divinity, the

* MS. On a feigned contemplative life. † Lib. iv. cap. 4.

Reformer's Conclusions, namely, That in the sacrament the substance of the material bread and wine remain the same after the consecration ; and secondly, That in the venerable sacrament the body and blood of Christ are not present essentially, but only figuratively ; with their consent decreed, that " These are execrable errors, and repugnant to the determinations of the Church."*

The most important Latin performance of Wickliff seems to be his *Trialogus* ; from which several passages have already been quoted.

This celebrated work was answered by WIDEFORT, a Franciscan, who dedicated his laboured Reply to archbishop Arundel.† L'Enfant tells us, in his *History of the Council of Constance*, that he found a copy of the *Trialogus* in the university of Frankfort on the Oder. It contains a dialogue between three speakers, whom the author calls Truth, Falsehood, and Wisdom. With what vehemence he opposed the fashionable abuses, may be collected from a single sentence respecting the crime of simony. " Those stupid Simonists imagine that Grace may be bought and sold like an ox or an ass." And speaking of the invocation of saints, he powerfully observes, " The festival of the day is to no purpose, if it do not tend to magnify Jesus Christ, and induce men to love HIM. Moreover, our Redeemer Jesus Christ is very God, as well as very man, and therefore, on account of his divinity, he must infinitely exceed any other man. And this consideration induces many to think that it would be expedient to worship no other Being among men, except Jesus Christ ; inasmuch as he is the best Mediator and best Intercessor ; and they likewise think, that when this was the practice of the Church, it increased and prospered much better than it does now. What folly then to apply to any other person to be our intercessor ! What folly to choose, of two persons proposed, the less eligible of the two, to be our intercessor ! Would any one choose the king's buffoon to be an intercessor ? The saints in heaven are not indeed buffoons ; but in dignity they are less, compared with Jesus Christ, than a buffoon is, when compared with an earthly king."

Wickliff is very pointed in asserting the authority of Scripture, which, he maintains, infinitely surpasses the authority of any other writings whatsoever ; and he declares

* Spelman, vol. ii.

† Fascic. rerum, vol. i.

that to hold the contrary, is the most damnable of all heresies. He assures us, that he so strenuously combated, in the university and before the people, the errors on the sacrament, because none had proved more destructive to mankind. "These errors," says he, "fleece men, and draw them into idolatry: They then deny the faith of the Scriptures; and by their infidelity provoke the God of truth." Such were the principles of Wickliff, and such the testimonies which he has left against the corruptions of the church of Rome.

5. There is an Apology for Wickliff, written by Dr. Thomas James, keeper of the public library at Oxford, for the purpose of showing this great Reformer's conformity with the doctrines of the established church of England. The contents of the Apology are collected chiefly from Wickliff's own manuscripts.—We shall present the reader with a few quotations.

Speaking of the Scriptures, Wickliff says, "I think it absurd to be warm in defence of the apocryphal books, when we have so many which are undeniably authentic. In order to distinguish canonical books from such as are apocryphal, use the following rules: 1. Look into the New Testament, and see what books of the Old Testament are therein cited and authenticated by the Holy Ghost. 2. Consider whether the like doctrine be delivered by the Holy Ghost elsewhere in the Scripture." These observations to us, no doubt, appear extremely obvious, and no more than plain, common sense: but those who are aware of the dominion of prejudice in the age of Wickliff, and of the implicit obedience then shown to ecclesiastical authority, will be best qualified to appreciate that vigour of understanding, and that resolute integrity, which could produce such sentiments, and a corresponding practical conduct.

Dr. James, the compiler, tells us that Wickliff was earnest, every where in his writings, to establish the grand protestant sentiment, of the sufficiency of the Scriptures for saving instruction; and that the reason of his earnestness and pious zeal was, in substance, this: "Few sermons were preached in his time; and those few were on fabulous subjects and traditions, and profaned with much scurrility and emptiness. Friars persecuted the faithful, and said, it had never been well with the Church since lords and ladies regarded the Gospel, and relinquished the manners of their ancestors."

“Some,” says he, “are enlightened from above, that they may explain the proper, literal, and historical sense of Scripture, in which sense, all things necessary in Scripture are contained.”

This remark was doubtless made to guard his readers against the devious paths of fantastic and endless allegories, in which the sportive genius of Origen had been so conversant; and which, for ages, had thrown so great a cloud over the genuine meaning of the Sacred Writers. It was, at the same time, a strong indication of the native vigour of that good sense, with which the pastor of Lutterworth was eminently endowed; and his idea of divine assistance, as necessary to qualify a man for the explanation of the revealed word, indicates his knowledge of our natural blindness and depravity: and further, in making this last observation, he doubtless intimates the very great advantage, which, as a religious instructor, a person, who is practically led by the Spirit of God, has over a mere self-sufficient theorist, depending on the use of his own understanding. We have, indeed, from the extreme disadvantages of obscurity, in which this author's works appear, little opportunity of estimating his merits as a theologian; but it is sufficiently evident, from a few fragments* of his voluminous writings, that, in light and talents, he was greatly superior to his contemporaries; and that he stands among the foremost of those agents, who, since the apostolic age, have been raised up by Providence to instruct and reform the human race.

“Sanctity of life,” he observes, “promotes this ILLUMINATION, so necessary for understanding the revealed word; to continue which in the Church is the duty of theologians, who ought to remain within their proper limits, and not to invent things foreign to the faith of Scripture.”

He lays down some good rules for an expositor. “1. He should be able by collation of manuscripts to settle well

* Subinco, archbishop of Prague, about the year 1409, endeavoured to collect all the writings of Wickliff, which had been introduced into Bohemia. He is said to have got into his possession 200 of them, all which he burnt by virtue of a royal edict.—Camerarius, *Historica Narratio*, p. 32.—The books were very finely written, and adorned with costly covers and golden bosses, which makes it probable that they belonged to the Bohemian nobility and gentry. This is the account which Æneas Sylvius gives of this transaction. *Fascic. rer. vol. i. 297.*

the sacred text. 2. He should be conversant in logic. 3. He should be constantly engaged in comparing one part of Scripture with another. 4. The student should be a man of prayer, and his disposition should be upright. 5. He needs the internal instruction of the Primary Teacher." This last is Augustine's favourite idea; namely, that a genuine relish for divine aid in rightly interpreting and applying Scripture, is the sure index of a humble spirit; and that the contempt of it no less powerfully indicates the prevalence of profaneness or self-conceit.

The Council of Constance condemned this great man, for denying the pope's supremacy. We shall afterwards see, that that council is entitled to little regard. What colour they might have for their censure, seems to be grounded on his avowed opinion, that all the bishops of Rome before his time, for three hundred years, had been heretics: and yet he advances, that "whoever disobeys the papal mandates, incurs the charge of Paganism."*

Further, in Dr. James's collection, there are also extracts and observations, in substance as follows :

"The merit of Christ is of itself sufficient to redeem every man from hell. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation; and without faith it is impossible to please God."

It also clearly appears that, on the leading controversy respecting Justification, Wickliff accorded fully with the protestant doctrines; and that he persuaded men "to trust WHOLLY TO CHRIST, to rely altogether upon his sufferings, and not to seek to be justified in any other way than by his justice:" that he said, "Unbelievers, though they might perform works apparently good in their matter, still were not to be accounted righteous men; that all, who followed Christ, became righteous through the participation of his righteousness, and would be saved." He adds the following sentences: "Human nature is wholly at enmity with God: All men are originally sinners, not only from their mothers' wombs, but in their mothers' wombs: We cannot think a good thought unless Jesus send it: We cannot perform a good work unless it be properly his good work: His mercy prevents us, so that we receive grace; and it follows us so as to help us and keep us in grace.

* Apology, chap. on the Pope, sect. 1.

Heal us, good Lord, we have no merit! Give us grace to know that all thy gifts be of thy goodness only.”*

These hints are recommended to the particular notice of such serious readers as set a high value on the essential truths of the gospel. The conclusion to be drawn from them is evident, but it is mortifying to find so little recorded from Wickliff’s writings respecting these truths, even by his most diligent biographers. Two of these, very great admirers of this Reformer, either did not comprehend the great doctrines of Justification by faith, and of the nature of good works, or, they must have thought them of little consequence. On all other points they dwell with sufficient accuracy, and with a minuteness of detail; whereas if they touch on these at all, it is done with the greatest reserve; and the little they say is far from being clear. Every admirer of Wickliff, if he be also a sincere approver of the inestimable protestant doctrines concerning the grace of God and the justification of man, will be gratified in reading the sentiments already produced from Dr. James’s collection. If such sentiments abound not in Wickliff’s writings, so much as sound and enlightened Christians might wish, it becomes the more necessary to take notice of those which we do find there

The Apology by Dr. James contains many other memorable sentiments of this Reformer: among which is this,—

“We worship not the image, but the Being represented by the image, say the patrons of idolatry in our times; suffice it to say, idolatrous heathens said the same.”

He also vehemently opposed the whole doctrine of Indulgences; and expressed in the most decisive manner, his disapprobation of forced vows of celibacy, either in the case of monks or of the secular clergy. He is accused of having been an enemy to all oaths, but the Apology proves directly the contrary: also a passage in his book against the mendicant friars, seems to invalidate the charge; “God,” says he, “teaches us to swear by himself, when necessity calls for it, and not by his creatures.”

In his treatise on the Truth of the Scriptures, Wickliff PROTESTS, that in his love and veneration for the Church of Rome, (which he calls his mother,) it was his study and endeavour to defend all her privileges. He adds, however,

* De Veritate Script. in Expos. Decal. Comment. in Psalm.

that her privileges came from God, and would be the more ample, in proportion as she conformed herself closer to Christ and his laws. No man ought to think that the faith of the church, or of any individual member of the church, depended upon this Peter, that John, or that Gregory. It might happen that our lord pope may be ignorant of the laws of the Scripture; and that the church of England may understand the Catholic truth far better than the whole aggregate of the Roman church with the pope and cardinals altogether.*

It has been said that Wickliff preached against purgatory;† but Dr. James allows that he speaks of the dreadful pains of purgatory, and of praying for the dead. It appears also that he prayed to the Virgin Mary. In one place, however, he certainly uses language which may be thought extraordinary in the writings of a man, who seriously believed the popish doctrine of a middle state of temporary punishment. His words are, “*Omnia dicta de purgatorio dicuntur solummodo comminatoriè tanquam pia mendacia.*”‡ That is, All things that are said concerning purgatory, are said only in the way of threatening; and are to be considered as pious falsehoods.

He maintained, that the papistical practice of extreme unction was no sacrament, and that if it had been so, Christ and his apostles would not have been silent on such a matter. He blames covetous and greedy priests for making this a source of profit.

Holy orders, however, he considered as one of the SEVEN sacraments of the Church. There were, he said, but *two* species of orders, namely that of deacons and of priests. The church militant ought not to be burdened with *three*; nor was there any ground for it.§ He inveighs severely against the “foul extortion” of fees which took place upon the admission into holy orders: he declares, that a man might have a common barber to attend him a whole year for what he paid to have his crown once shaven. It may deserve notice, that the two last positions, concerning extreme unction, and holy orders, are among the 287 articles which were selected from Wickliff’s writings, and condemned at Oxford in the year 1411.||

* Dr. James’s Apol. c. iv. 1

† Fuller, p. 130.

‡ De Verit. Script.

§ Dr. James’s Apol. c. viii. 2 and 4.

|| Antiq. Oxon. 205.

The same two Articles are also among the 301 Conclusions, condemned at the Council of Constance.*

III.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF WICKLIFF.

We may allow and lament, that in certain difficult and dangerous moments of his life, there existed in the defences and explanations of Wickliff, some apparent equivocation; but who can deny, that he was a sincere believer of Christianity, and a zealous advocate for its essential doctrines?

“He was distinguished,” says the historian Hume, “by a great austerity of life and manners;” and the historian then coolly observes, that this is “a circumstance common to almost all those, who DOGMATIZE IN ANY NEW WAY.” Infidel philosophers and infidel historians, never comprehend how the honour of God, and the salvation of men, can be the ruling principles of a rational conduct. The profession of such principles appears to them to be connected with hypocrisy or enthusiasm: and, therefore, in estimating the merits of truly religious characters, they make no candid allowance for the weakness and imperfection of human nature; but are most ingenious and acute in discovering faults and inconsistencies, as well as bitter and sarcastic in exposing them. If, on the one hand, we may have been mortified in finding ourselves constrained to differ from many in their unbounded applause of Dr. Wickliff, it is surely a duty, on the other, to correct the uncandid and injurious representations of a profane historian, who would insinuate to the minds of the unwary, that this Reformer, “though a man of parts and learning,” was in fact a cautious or cowardly enthusiast. Moreover, supposing it true, that Wickliff’s timid disposition, or any other cause, induced him to decline the praise of martyrdom—is it not at least equally true, that he involved himself in much danger and difficulty, by bringing forward his opinions; that he showed much courage and ability in supporting them; and that, rather than retract them, he suffered heavy persecutions with great patience and fortitude? Did the philosophic Mr. Hume infer the nature of a man’s disposition from an occasional imbecility mani-

fested in some trying moments, rather than from the uniform tenour of his conduct? Or did he esteem every man a coward or a hypocrite, who, in explaining his religious sentiments, may, in some instances, have softened them, or perhaps have equivocated for the purpose of saving his life?—This is ONE very clear and decisive instance of Mr. Hume's prejudice and partiality. There are many others, in his writings, of a similar kind. He has a very sly and artful way of insinuating his own opinions, and of depreciating truly religious men; and it is not a sufficient guard against this practice, merely to advertise the young student that this is actually the case, and that therefore he must be constantly on the watch. Instances, like this respecting Wickliff, should be produced. It would be very easy to collect a number of a similar sort; and such a collection of particular and distinct examples would be infinitely more efficacious in preventing the daily mischief done by this author's rash assertions, and dangerous insinuations, than numerous pages of general disapprobation or abuse with which many well-intentioned publications continually abound. Show the student that his favourite historian or philosopher is under the dominion of the most violent prejudices, and that he is capable of misrepresenting notorious facts; do this, even in one instance only, and the memory of it will sink deep into his mind, and prove salutary in its consequences.

IV.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE PANEGYRIC AND CALUMNY
WITH WHICH WICKLIFF HAS BEEN TREATED BY HIS-
TORIANS AND BIOGRAPHERS.

1. The mendicant friars, who settled in Oxford about the year 1230, proved very troublesome and offensive to the university. Their insolent behaviour produced endless quarrels, and their conduct in general was so exceptionable, that so far from being objects of charity, they became a reproach to all religion. Wickliff lashed this set of men with great acrimony and acuteness; and, by exposing their shameful corruptions and hypocritical pretences, made known his learning and talents, and established his own reputation and consequence. He became at once the beloved and the admired champion of the

* Hume, Rich. II. chap. 17.

university. On the contrary, the mendicants “ were set on a rage and madness ; and even as hornets with their sharp stings they assailed this good man on every side, fighting for their altars, paunches, and bellies.”* But the daring, active spirit of Wickliff was not to be overcome by the opposition of such men. Fortunately for him, they were in the highest discredit at Oxford ; whereas our Reformer was looked up to almost as an oracle ; for he had not, as yet, proceeded to those lengths of innovation, which afterwards called forth the vengeance of the hierarchy, and involved him in various difficulties and persecutions. His friends procured him a benefice ; he took his degree of doctor of divinity ; he was elected into the professor’s chair ; and he read lectures publicly with the greatest applause.†

2. The credit and interest of Wickliff were much strengthened by the active part which he took in supporting the independence of the crown against the pope’s pretensions and menaces. Pope Urban claimed a tribute from King Edward III. The clergy in general espoused the cause of his holiness ; but Wickliff distinguished himself, by publishing a masterly answer to the most plausible arguments which could be produced in support of so unjust a demand. This step irritated his brethren, the clergy, with the pope at their head ; the professor of divinity, however, had the Parliament, as well as every disinterested subject of the realm, on his side in this question. From the same cause he seems to have been first made known at court, and particularly to the duke of Lancaster. His great learning, increasing celebrity, and powerful connections, all contributed to support his courage, and to give vigour to the resolutions which he had secretly made for reforming the prevailing corruptions. Accordingly, he proceeded to open the eyes of the people with still greater boldness and plainness of speech. He demonstrated the Romish religion to be a system of errors : he attacked the scandalous lives of the monastic clergy ; and showed how they invented and multiplied such superstitious opinions and doctrines, as suited their worldly, sensual, and avaricious views.

3. These extraordinary steps both alarmed the hierarchy and excited its resentment. The clergy raised violent

* Fox’s Acts and Monuments.

† Leland, de Script. Brit.

clamours against the heretic : the archbishop of Canterbury took the lead ; and the professor was silenced and deprived. In this very moment of his disgrace, we find Dr. Wickliff was brought to court, treated with peculiar kindness, and appointed one of the king's ambassadors,* for the purpose of treating with the pope, concerning a variety of intolerable hardships and usurpations under which the nation had long groaned. On his return, he appears to have recovered his station in Oxford, and to have inveighed against the church of Rome in stronger language than he had ever done before, both in his public lectures and in private. His negotiations abroad with the pope's nuncios had afforded him opportunities of seeing more striking proofs of the ambition, covetousness, tyranny, and insolence of the papal domination. In this part of the history of our Reformer, there is considerable defect and obscurity. We find, however, that, notwithstanding his employments in the university, he was often at court, and continued in high credit with the duke of Lancaster ; and though, by many of the clergy, he was esteemed an enemy to the church and a false brother, he obtained the rectory of Lutterworth, through the royal favour. These facts deserve particular notice ; as they determine several points beyond all controversy : namely, the great weight of Wickliff's character and reputation ; his disposition to public business ; and, lastly, the sources of that esteem and applause on the one hand, and, on the other, of that hatred and calumny, which he met with so plentifully in the former part of his life.

4. While the Reformer confined himself to attacks on the luxury and indolence of the mendicant friars, he was the favourite of the university of Oxford : while he only opposed the exorbitant claims of the papacy upon the king and his subjects, he was admired and applauded by the English court and parliament : his conduct, however, in both these instances, marked him at the court of Rome as an object of detestation and vengeance ; and we need not wonder, if the ecclesiastical dignitaries in England, and the regular clergy in general, sympathized with the pope in sentiment and feeling. In effect, the dignitaries complained to the pope ; and the pope in great wrath sent bull after bull to the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London, directing them to take immediate cognizance

* Rymer's Fœdera ; A. D. 1374.

of Wickliff's heresies, and to imprison him. Hence the citations, of which, and of their consequences, we have already given a concise account. And it deserves to be remembered how in those affairs the pope and his delegates had the art to select such articles of accusation against the innovator, as might prove a severe trial of his fortitude and sincerity, and also be most likely to involve him in much difficulty and equivocation ; and yet at the same time bring the least odium upon themselves as accusers. But as soon as Wickliff began to assail the Roman Catholic religion in a closer manner, and to level his batteries at its very foundations ; when he was no longer content with exposing the infamous lives and practices of the monastic orders, or with declaiming against the avaricious encroachments and contemptible superstitions of the papal system ; when he proceeded to show how the pure doctrines of the gospel, and the true spirit of Christianity, were almost lost amidst the innumerable abominations of popery ; when he descended to particulars, attacked the reigning doctrines of transubstantiation, of worshipping images and deceased saints, and, above all, of merits and satisfactions, and restored in their place the sound evangelical doctrines of the meritorious sacrifice of our Saviour, and of Justification by faith, we then find not only the whole hierarchy in a flame, but even the vice-chancellor and governing part of the university of Oxford, joining in the general outcry against their professor of divinity. Hence the vice-chancellor's peremptory decree, at Oxford, against Wickliff's notions of transubstantiation ; and we may add, hence also the decline of our theologian's interest with the nobility and worldly persons of all descriptions.* To understand this rightly, we should constantly keep in view the distinction that is to be made between the applause which, in general, failed not to accompany Wickliff, as a censorer of gross immoralities and an advocate for religious liberty, and the cold approbation or sceptical reserve with which he was treated, considered as a preacher of the pure Gospel of Christ, and a reviver of the most important practical truths. In the former case he met with few to oppose or envy him, except those who were immediately interested in supporting vice or usurpation ; but in regard to the latter, the greater part of mankind did as they have

* This plainly showed that Wickliff was not, as his enemies have called him, a mere time-serving professor.—ED.

often done in far more enlightened times, they either suspected that he carried his notions too far, or they kept aloof from him with a profane and indolent negligence; or lastly, they wavered between the religion in which they had been educated, and the Reformer's novelties, and by immersing themselves in business, or in pleasure, both stifled the convictions of conscience, and escaped the dangers of persecution.

5. It will easily be conceived, that to accomplish Wickliff's views, one of the most popular, and at the same time most useful steps, which he could possibly have taken, was his translation of the Bible into the English language. The clergy indeed clamoured against the measure almost universally; and it may be instructive as well as entertaining to the reader, to see, by a short quotation from a learned canon* of Leicester, and a contemporary of Wickliff, what was thought to be good reasoning by the ecclesiastics of that day. "Christ," says he, "committed the gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might minister it to the laity and weaker persons, according to the exigency of times and persons' wants; but this Master John Wickliff translated it out of Latin into English; and by that means laid it more open to the laity and to women who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding. And so the gospel pearl is cast abroad and trodden under swine; and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common jests of both; and the jewel of the Church is turned into the sport of the laity."

In our times, one cannot but be astonished, that the bishops, after much consultation, should have brought a bill into parliament to suppress Wickliff's Bible; but it was thrown out by a great majority.

The effect, which, under the direction of the good providence of God, the publication of the Holy Scriptures, translated into our own language, produced on the minds of men, must have been very considerable in no great length of time: and it is not easy to conceive how any human means could contribute more to the spreading of the essential doctrines of Christianity. We wish that several diligent and spirited panegyrist of Wickliff had shown an anxiety, in their laudable researches into antiquity, to furnish

* Knyghton, de Event.

instances of the conversion of our countrymen from the ways of the world to the practice of godliness. That many such instances did exist, through the indefatigable labours of Wickliff in public and in private, we doubt not; yet we mean not to insinuate, that if they had been recorded, they would have added much to the general fame or celebrity of the Reformer, in the present circumstances of the world. There is indeed, in the Holy Scriptures, a most encouraging promise to those that be wise, and who shall “turn many unto righteousness;” but, it is not in this state of existence; it is when they shall awake from their sleep in the dust of the earth, that they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.*

6. To return: Let the reader remember, that Wickliff not only published an English translation of the Bible; but also pleaded, in a very spirited and sensible manner, the RIGHT of the people to read the Scriptures.† All this tended the more to provoke the clergy, and to increase his popularity with the laity. Disinterested persons of every description, if they possessed the least degree of seriousness, and liberality of thinking, must have been gratified to have the Bible rescued from obscurity; though we may allow, without difficulty, that many sincere Roman Catholics of the unlearned and weaker sort, may have been greatly puzzled and distressed in their minds, between the discoveries made to them by the Scriptures, and that mass of wretched superstition, which they had been accustomed to receive, all their days, with implicit faith.

If these facts and suggestions prove useful to the reader, who wishes to understand the character of this extraordinary Reformer, and to account for the various lights, and, it might be added, the various obscurities, in which he has been transmitted to us, the object is obtained.—We shall now add two short quotations, and then give a specimen of his style.

The first is from a very concise life of Wickliff, written by Dr. Thomas James, author of the *Apology* already mentioned.

“God gave Dr. Wickliff grace to see the truth of his gospel, and by seeing it, to loath all superstition and popery . . . ! By Abelard and others, he was grounded in the right faith of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper;

* Dan. xii. 2, 3.

† *Speculum secular.*

by Bradwardine in the nature of a true sole-justifying faith against merit-mongers and pardoners, PELAGIANS and PAPISTS. Finally, by reading Grosseteste's works, in whom he seemed to be most conversant, he described the pope to be Antichrist."

The second is a very solemn declaration of Wickliff, contained in one of his Latin tracts.*

"Let God be my witness," says he, "that I principally intend the honour of God, and the good of the Church, from a spirit of veneration to the divine word, and of obedience to the law of Christ. But if, with that intention, a sinister view of vain-glory, of secular gain, or of vindictive malice, hath crept in unknown to myself, I sincerely grieve on the account, and, by the grace of God, will guard against it."

Dr. James asks, "What could be spoken more ingenuously, soberly, or christianly?"†

V.

ADDITIONAL EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF WICKLIFF.

The following extract is a fine specimen of the clear, nervous, and even elegant style of Wickliff, (if due allowance be made for the times.) It is almost the whole of one of his tracts; and is now among the MSS. in the library of Benet' College, Cambridge.

WHY MANY PRIESTS HAVE NO BENEFICES.

Some Causes why poor Priests receive not Benefices:—the first, for dread of symony; the second, for dread of mispending poor men's goods; the third, for dread of letting (hindering) of better occupation that is more light or easy, more certain and more profitable.

I. For, first, if men should come to benefices by gift of prelates, there is dread of symony. For commonly they taken the first-fruits, or other pensions, or holden curates in office in their courts or chapels, in offices far fro(m) priests' life, taught, and ensampled of Christ and his apostles. So that commonly such benefices comen not freely as Christ commandeth, but rather for worldly winning, or flattering of mighty men, and not for kunning (knowledge) of God's law, and true preaching of the

* De Ver. Script.

† Dr. James's Apology.

Gospel, and ensample of holy life; and therefore commonly these prelates, and receivers ben fouled with symony, that is cursed heresie, as God's law and man's law techen. And now whoever can run to Rome, and bear gold out of the lond, and strive and plead, and curse for tithes, and other temporal profits, that be cleped with antichrist's clerks rights of holy church, shall have great benefices of cure of many thousand souls, tho he be unable, and of cursed life, and wicked ensample of pride, of covetisse, glotony, leachery, and other great sins. But if there be any simple man, that desireth to live well, and teche truly God's law, he shall ben holden an hypocrite, a new teacher, an heretick, and not suffered to come to any benefice. But if in any little poor place he liven a poor life, he shall be so pursued, and slandered, that he shall be put out by wiles, cantels, frauds, and worldly violence, and imprisoned or brent (burnt). And if lords shullen present clerks to benefices, they wolen have commonly gold in great quantity, and holden these curates in some worldly office, and suffren the wolves of hell to stranglen men's souls, so that they have their office done for nought, and their chappels holden up for vain-glory or hypocrisy; and yet they wolen not present a clerk able to God's law, and of good life, and holy ensample to the people; but a kitchen-clerk, or a penny-clerk, or one wise in building castles, or other worldly doing; tho he kun (know) not read his sauter, (Psalter) and knoweth not the commandments of God, ne sacraments of holy church. And yet some lords, to colouren their symony wole not take for themselves, but kerchiefs for the lady, or a palfray, or a tun of wine. And when some lords woulden present a good man, then some ladies ben means to have a dancer presented, or a tripper on tapits, or hunter, or a hawker, or a wild player of summer gambels. And thus it seemeth, that both prelates, and lords commonly maken some cursed antichrist, or a quick fiend to be master of Christ's people, for to leaden them to hell to Sathanas their master; and suffer not Christ's disciples to teche Christ's Gospel to his children for to save their souls.

But in this presenting of evil curates, and holding of curates in worldly office, letting (hindering) them fro their ghostly cure, ben three degrees of traitery agenst God and his people. The first is in prelates and lords, that thus holden curates in their worldly office, for they have their

high states in the church, and lordships, for to purvey true curates to the people, and to meyntene them in God's law, and punish them, if they failen in their ghostly cure, and by this they holden their lordships of God. Then if they maken evil curates, and holden them in their worldly office, and letten (hinder) them to lead God's people the rightful way to heaven, but helpen them, and constreynen them to lead the people to hell-ward, by withdrawing of God's word, and by evil ensample geving, they ben weiward traytors to God and his people, and vicars of Sathanas.—2. Yet more traitery is in false curates, that geven mede or hire to comen into such worldly offices, and to get lordship and maintenance agenst ordinances, and couchen in lords' courts for to get mo fatte benefices, and purposen not spedly to do their ghostly office. Woe is to the lords that ben led with such cursed heretics, antichrists, traytors of God and his people; and traytors to lords themselves; who ben so blinded, that they perceiven not that such traytors, that openly ben false to God, wolen much more ben false to them.—3. But the most traitery is in false confessors, that shulden by their office warn prelates, and lords of this great peril, and clerks also that they holden none such curates in their worldly offices. For they don not this, lest they lessen lordship, and friendship, and gifts, and welfare of their stinking belly; and so they sellen Christen soul to Sathanas, and maken prelates and lords, and curates to live in sin and traitery agenst God and his people, and deceiven them in their souls health, and meyntenen them in cursed traitery of God and his people; and thus almost all the world goeth to hell for this cursed symony of false confessors. For commonly prelates, lords, and curates be envenymed with this heresy of symony, and never done very repentance, and satisfaction therefore. For when they have a fat benefice geten by symony, they forsaken it not as they ben bounden by law, but wittingly usen forth that symony, and liven in riot, covetisse, and pride, and don not their office neither in good ensample, ne in true teching. And thus antichrist's clerks, enemies of Christ, and his people, by money, and flattering, and fleshly love, gedring to them leading of the people, forbare true priests to teche God's law, and therefore the blind leadeth the blind, and both parts runnen into sin, and full many to hell: and it is huge wonder that God of his righteousness

destroyeth not the houses of prelates, and lords, and curates, as Sodom and Gomor for heresie, extortions, and other cursednesses. And for dread of this sin, and many mo, some poor wretches receive no benefices in this world.

II. Yet tho poor priests mighten freely gotten presentation of lords to have benefices with cure of souls, they dreaden of mispending poor men's goods. For priests owen to hold themselves paid with food, and cloathing, as St. Paul techeth; and if they have more it is poor men's goods, as their own law, and God's law feyn, and they ben keepers thereof, and procurators of poor men. But for institution and induction he shall give much of this good, that is poor men's, to bishops' officers, archdeacons, and officials, that ben too rich. And when bishops and their officers comen, and feynen to visit, tho they nourishen men in open sin for annual rent, and don not their office, but sellen souls to Sathanas for money, wretched curates ben neded to feasten them richly, and give procuracy and synage, yea against God's law, and man's, and reason, and their own conscience, and yet they shullen not be suffered to teche truly God's law to their own subjects, and warn them of false prophets, who deceiven them both in belief and teching: for then they musten crie to the people the great sins of prelates; but they demen (think) that such sad reproving of sin is envy, slandering of prelates, and destroying of holy church. Also many times their patrons willen look to be feasted of such curates, else maken them lese that little thing, that they and poor men shullen live by. So that they shullen not spend their tithes and offerings after good conscience, and God's laws, but waste them on rich and idle men. Also eche good day commonly these small curates shullen have letters fro their ordinaries to summon, and to curse poor men for nought, but for covetisse of antichrist's clerks; and if they not sumonen and cursen them, tho they know no cause why, they shullen ben hurted, and summoned fro day to day, fro far place to farther, or cursed, or lese their benefits or profits. For else, as prelates feinen, they by their rebeldy shulden soon destroy prelates' jurisdiction, power, and winning. Also, when poor priests, first holy of life, and devout in their prayers, be beneficed, if they ben not busy about the world to make great feasts to rich persons and vicars, and costly and gayly arrayed, by false doom of the world, they shullen be

hated and hayned on as hounds, and ech man redy to peire (rob) them in name, and worldly goods. So many cursed deceits hath antichrist brought up by his worldly clerks to make curates to mispende poor men's goods, and not truly do their office; or else to forsaken all, and let antichrist's clerks, as lords of this world, rob the poor people by feyned censures, and teche the fend's lore both by open preaching, and ensample of cursed life. Also, if such curates ben stirred to learn God's law, and teche their parishens the Gospel, commonly they shullen get no leave of bishops, but for gold; and when they shullen most profit in their learning, then shullen they be clepid at home at the prelate's will. And if they shullen have any high sacraments, commonly they shulle buy them with poor men's goods; and so there is full great peril of evil spending of these goods, both upon prelates, rich men of the country, patrons, parsons, and their own kyn, for fame of the world, and for shame, and evil deming of men. And certes it is great wonder that God suffreth so long this sin unpunished, namely of prelates' courts, that ben dens of thieves, and larders of hell; and so of their officers, that ben sotil in malice and covetisse; and of lords, and mighty men, that shulden destroy this wrong and other, and meyntenen truth, and God's servants, and now meyntenen antichrist's falsness and his clerks, for part of the winning. But certes God suffreth such hypocrites and tyrants to have name of prelates for great sins of the people, that eche part lead other to hell by blindness of the fend. And this is a thousand time more vengeance, than if God shud destroy bodily both parts, and all their goods, and earth therewith, as he did by Sodom and Gomor. For the longer that they liven thus in sin, the greater pains shullen they have in hell, unless they amenden them.—And this dread, and many mo, maken some poor priests to receiven none benefices.

III. But yet tho poor priests mighten have freely presentation of lords, and be holpen by meyntening of kings, and help of good commons fro extortions of prelates, and other mispending of these goods, that is full hard in this reigning of antichrist's clerks, yet they dreden sore that by singular cure ordained of sinful men they shulden be letted fro better occupation, and fro more profit of holy church. And this is the most dread of all; for they have cure and charge at the full of God to help their brethren to heaven.

ward, both by teching, praying, and example-geving. And it seemeth that they shullen most easily fulfill this by general cure of charity, as did Christ and his apostles. And by this they most sikerly (surely) save themselves, and help their brethren: and they ben free to flee fro one city to another, when they ben pursued of antichrist's clerks, as biddeth Christ in the gospel. And they may best without challenging of men go and dwell among the people where they shullen most profit, and in covenable (convenient) time come, and go after stirring of the Holy Ghost, and not be bounden by sinful men's jurisdiction fro the better doing. Also they pursuen Christ and his Apostles nearer, in taking alms wilfully of the people that they techen, than in taking dymes (dues or tythes) and offerings by customs that sinful men ordeynen, and usen now in the time of grace. Also this is more medeful on both sides as they understonden by Christ's life, and his Apostles: for thus the people geveth them alms more wilfully and devoutly, and they taken it more mekely, and ben more busy to lerne, kepe and teche God's law, and so it is the better for both sides. Also by this manner might and shulde the people geve freely their alms to true priests that truly kepen their order, and taughten the gospel; and withdrawen fro wicked priests, and not to be constreyned to pay their tithes, and offrings to open cursed men to meyntene them in their open cursedness. And thus shulde symony, covetisse, and idleness of worldly clerks be laid down; and holiness, and true teching, and knowing of God's law be brought in both in clerks and lewid (lay) men; also thus shulde striving, pleading, and cursing for dymes and offrings, and hate and discord among priests, and lewid men be ended; and unity, peace, and charity meyntened. Also these benefices, by this course, that men usen now, bring in worldliness, and needless business about worldly offices, that Christ and his apostles wolden never taken upon them, and yet they weren more mighty, more witty, and more brenning in charity to God, and to the people, both to live the best manner in themselves, and to teche other men. Also covetisse, and worldliness of the people shulden be done away; and Christ's poverty, and his apostles, by ensample of poor life of clerks, and trust in God, and desiring of heavenly bliss, shulde regne in Christen people. Also then shulde priests study holy writt, and be devout in their prayers, and not be carried

away with new offices, and mo sacraments than Christ used, and his apostles, that taughten us all truth. Also mochil blasphemy of prelates, and other men of feyned obedience, and nedless swearings made to worldly prelates shulden then cessen, and sovreyn obedience to God and his law, and eschewing of nedless othes shulde regne among Christen men. Also then shulde men eschew commonly all the perils said before in the first chapter, and second, and many thousand mo, and live in clenness and sikerness of conscience. Also then shulde priests be busy to seke God's worship and saving of men's souls, and not their own worldly glory and winning of worldly dritt. Also then shulden priests live like to angels, as they ben angels of (by) office, whereas they liven now as swine in fleshly lusts, and turnen agen to their former sins for abundance of worldly goods, and idleness in their ghostly office, and overmuch business about this wretched life.

For these dreads and many thousand mo, and for to be mo like to Christ's life and his apostles, and for to profit mo to their own souls and other men's, some poor priests thinken with God to traveile about where they shudden most profiten, by evidence that God geveth them, while they have time, and little bodily strength and youth. Nethless they damnen not curates that don well their office, and dwellen where they shullen most profit, and techen truly and stably God's law agenst false prophets, and cursed fends deceits.

Christ, for his endless mercy, help his priests and common people to beware of Antichrist's deceits, and go even the right way to heaven! Amen, Jesu, for thy endless charity.

WICKLIFF'S TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

Wickliff, in one place, defines the CHURCH to be the congregation of just men for whom Christ shed his blood. And in others he speaks thus: "Scripture is the faith of the church, and the more it is known in an orthodox sense the better; therefore, as secular men ought to know the faith, the divine word is to be taught them in whatever language is best known to them. The truth of the faith is clearer and more exact in the Scripture than the priests know how to express it; and if one may say so, there are many prelates who are ignorant of Scripture, and others

who conceal things contained in it. It seems useful, therefore, that the faithful should themselves search and discover the sense of the faith, by having the Scriptures in a language which they know and understand. Christ and his apostles converted men by making known to them the Scriptures in that language which was familiar to them. Why then ought not the modern disciples of Christ to collect fragments from the loaf; and, as they did, clearly open the Scriptures to the people, that they may know them? The apostle teaches, that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be answerable for all the goods intrusted to us; it is necessary, therefore, the faithful should know these goods and the use of them, that they may give a proper answer. For the answer by a prelate or an attorney will not THEN avail, but every one MUST answer in his OWN person."*

In this manner did our zealous Reformer argue for a translation of the Bible into the ENGLISH language.

In his prologue to the translation, he informs us of the method in which he proceeded, notwithstanding the opposition he met with, and the clamours that were raised against him on the account. 1. He, with several who assisted him, got together all the Latin Bibles they could, which they diligently collated and corrected, in order that they might have one Latin Bible near the truth. In the next place, they collected the ordinary comments, with which they studied the text so as to make themselves masters of its sense and meaning. Lastly, they consulted the old grammarians and ancient divines, respecting the hard words and sentences. After this was done, Wickliff set about the translation, which he resolved should not be literal, but so as to express the meaning as clearly as he could.

A specimen or two of Wickliff's New Testament, in the old English of his time, may not displease the reader.

Matt. xi. 25, 26. "In thilke tyme Jhesus answeride & seid, I knowleche to thee, Fadir, Lord of hevene & of earthe, for thou hast hid these thingis fro wise men and redy, & hast schewid hem to litil children. So, Fadir; for so it was plesynge to fore thee."

John x. 26—30. "Ye beleven not, for ye ben not of my scheep. My scheep heren my vois, and I knowe hem, and thei suen me. And I gyve to hem everlastynge life, &

* Great sentence.—Spec. Secul.—Doctr. Christ.

thei schulen not perische, withouten end ; & noon schal raaysche hem fro myn hond. That thing that my Fadir gaf to me, is more than alle thingis : & no man may raaysche from my Fadris hond. I & the Fadir ben oon."

Rom. ix 12. "It was seid to him, that the more schulde serve the lesse : as it is writun, I louyde Jacob, but I hatide Esau. What therfore schulen we seie? wher wickidnesse be anentis God? God forbede. For he seith to Moises, I schal have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I schal ghyve mercy on whom I have mercy. Therefore, it is not neither of man willynge, neither rennynge; but of God hauynge mercy. And the Scripture seith to Farao, For to this thing have I styrrid thee, that I schewe in thee my vertu, and that my name be teeld in al erthe. Therefore, of whom God wole, he hath mercy : & whom he wole, he endurith. Thanne seith thou to me, what is sought ghit, for who withstondith his will? Oo man, what art thou that answerist to God! Wher a maad thing seith to him that made it, What hast thou maad me so? Wher a pottere of cley hath not power to make, of the same gobet, oo vessel into onour, a nothir into dispyt!"*

WICKLIFF'S SENTIMENTS ON ELECTION.

It has been already observed, that the distinguishing tenet of Wickliff was, undoubtedly, the election of Grace. He calls the Church an assembly of predestinated persons. Much more might be produced to the same effect. On some occasions he speaks in such strong terms on this subject, that he has been understood to lean even to the doctrines of absolute necessity and fatalism. The student of ecclesiastical history may be pleased to have some evidence relative to this laid before him, that he may have the opportunity of judging for himself.

From the proceedings of the council of Constance, it appears that the opinions of Wickliff called heretical were digested into forty-five specific articles, and unanimously condemned by that assembly. One of those articles is, "All things happen from absolute necessity."† The manner in which this great man defended it, proves him to have been a deep thinker and a skilful disputant.

"Our Lord," says he in his Trialogus, "affirmed that such

* This being a passage frequently quoted in controversy, it is supposed, that particular pains were taken with it by the translator.

† L'Enfant.

or such an event should come to pass. Its accomplishment, therefore, was unavoidable. The antecedent is necessary ;—by parity of argument the consequent is so too. The consequent is not in the power of any created being, forasmuch as the declarations of Christ, and the elections of his mind, are not liable to accidents. And therefore, as it is absolutely certain, and cannot be otherwise but that Christ hath foretold certain events, those events must necessarily come to pass. The same kind of argument will demonstrate every event to be necessary, the future existence of which hath been previously determined by God : and it will make no difference, in whatever manner, or by whatever after-discoveries in time, it may have pleased God to inform us that he had actually determined so, before the creation of the world. If the thing be clearly and necessarily so, namely, that God did predetermine any event, the consequence is inevitable : that event must take place. Now what can prevent future events from having been predetermined by the Deity ? Want of knowledge ? inconstancy of will ? efficacy of impediments to interrupt his purpose ? But with respect to God there is no room for any of these suppositions. Every future event must therefore necessarily take place.”*

Wickliff states the above argument, drawn from the prophecies of our Lord, with great triumph. It had puzzled, he said, the very best reasoners ; and by its brilliancy had absolutely confounded superficial divines : among whom he reckons the then bishop of Armagh, who owned that he had laboured for twenty years to reconcile the free-will of man with the certain completion of Christ's predictions ; and, after all, saw no way of evading the conclusion in favour of necessity, but by allowing that Christ might possibly have been mistaken and have misinformed his Church in regard to future events.

From this and similar passages, it has been concluded that Wickliff was a fatalist. But the whole question turns upon the meaning of such expressions as, “ *sicut necessario Christus illud asseruit, ita necessario illud eveniet.*” The just interpretation of which, according to Wickliff's ideas, is given, I think, in the translation above. He never meant to say that Christ was not a free agent, but merely that it was absolutely CERTAIN, and could not be otherwise, that Christ HAD MADE such or such declara-

* Lib. iii. cap. 9. Trialog.

tions. I am confirmed in this opinion by three reasons . 1. From having very diligently considered the passage itself, as it stands in the ninth chapter of the third book of the *Triologus* : 2. From observing that some of those who have thought differently, have probably never seen the *Triologus* itself. The book is very scarce, and they do not refer to it, but only to certain extracts from it by Widefort, who was an enemy, and gives them unfairly : And, 3. by attending to Wickliff's sentiments as they are delivered in other parts of that work. In book the second, chapter the fourteenth, he says : " If you ask, what is the real cause of the eternal decrees of God before they are made, the answer is, the WILL OF GOD, or GOD HIMSELF : and again, in the tenth chapter of the first book, where the author is treating particularly of the wisdom and power of God, he expressly affirms, that the Divine energy acts with the most perfect freedom, though the effects produced by it must necessarily happen. " *Quantum ad libertatem divinæ potentiæ, patet quod est summè libera, et tamen quicquid facit, necessario eveniet.*"

" That the Supreme Being acts in the most exact conformity to his own decrees, is a truth which Scripture again and again asserts ; but that HE was and is absolutely free in decreeing, is no less asserted by the inspired writers ; who with one voice declare, that the disposals and appointments of the Almighty do not depend on any antecedent and fatal necessity, but on his own free choice directed by infinite wisdom." If Wickliff went further than this, he ought not to be defended.

Thomas Netter, commonly called Thomas of Walden, a learned Roman Catholic of the Carmelite order, was one of his greatest adversaries. With no little need for patience, I have examined his evidence against Wickliff, respecting the charge of Fatalism ; and am convinced that he misrepresents the sentiments of the excellent man, whom he so much disliked. Wickliff, on several occasions, for argument sake, appears to grant that there would be a contradiction in supposing any thing to be producible, which God does not actually produce ; but in one place he expressly informs us, that it was an usual thing with him to guard concessions of that sort by limiting them in such a manner that they should be no restraint on the Divine Will ; every thing,

according to him, is producible WHICH GOD PLEASES TO PRODUCE. "I know very well," says Wickliff, "that, in pretending to treat of the wisdom and power of God, I am plunging into an ocean of difficulties, where I may be apt to PRATE concerning many things, without having a good foundation for what I say. I know that it is a very hard matter to preserve the due course, especially as on many points I think differently from what I formerly did. However, as I was then ready to own my error, so I trust I always shall be, whenever I am shown that I have advanced any thing contrary to truth."*

The account of this Reformer cannot be closed better than in the words of a very useful memorialist,† who speaks of Wickliff in substance as follows :

"I intend neither to deny, dissemble, defend, nor excuse any of his faults. We have this treasure, says the apostle, in EARTHEN vessels ; and he that shall endeavour to prove a pitcher of clay to be a pot of gold, will take great pains to small purpose. Yea, should I be over-officious to retain myself to plead for Wickliff's faults, that glorious saint would sooner chide than thank me. He was a man, and so subject to error ; he lived in a dark age, and was vexed with opposition ; and it is therefore unreasonable that the constitution of his positive opinions should be GUESSED by his polemical heat, when he was chafed in disputation. Besides, envy has FALSELY fathered many foul aspersions upon him. What a pity it is that we have not his works, to hear him speak in his own behalf ! Were they all extant we might know the occasion, intention, and connection of what he spake, together with the limitations, restrictions, distinctions, and qualifications of what he maintained. There we might see what was overplus of passion, and what the just measure of his judgment. Many phrases, heretical in sound, would appear orthodox in sense. Some of his poisonous passages, dressed with due caution, would prove wholesome, and even cordial truths : many of his expressions wanting, not GRANUM PONDERIS, but SALIS ; no weight of truth, but some grains of discretion. But, alas ! two hundred of his books are burnt ; and we are fain to borrow the bare titles of them from his adversaries, who have winnowed his works, as Satan did Peter, not to find CORN, but CHAFF."

* Lib. i. cap. 10. and iii. c. 8.

† Fuller, b. iv.

CENTURY THE FIFTEENTH.

CHAP. I.

THE LOLLARDS.

TERMS of reproach have, in all ages, been applied to real Christians. LOLLARD, the name given to the followers of Wickliff, is to be considered as one of them. But it is necessary to use it, that the persons, whose story is the subject of this chapter, may be more distinctly defined.

That same Courtney, bishop of London, whose examination of Wickliff, together with the extraordinary circumstances which attended that examination, has been laid before the reader, afterwards became archbishop of Canterbury; and in that exalted station employed himself with great vehemence and asperity against the disciples of the man who, by the protection of the duke of Lancaster, had escaped his vengeance. King Richard II. also was induced to patronise this persecution, though it does not appear that, during his reign, any of the Lollards were actually put to death. That the blind fury of ambitious and unprincipled men was thus, for a time, restrained from committing the last acts of injustice and barbarity, is to be ascribed, partly to the power of the duke of Lancaster, who may be called the political father of the Lollards; and partly to the influence of Ann, the consort of Richard II., and sister of Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia. The accounts of this princess, in regard to religion, are brief; yet they merit our particular attention, because they seem to illustrate the course of Divine Providence, in paving the way for that connection between England and Bohemia, by which the labours of Wickliff became so serviceable in propagating the gospel in the latter country. She lived

with king Richard about eleven years; and died in the year 1394, in the seventeenth year of his reign.* It is remarked of her, that she had in her possession the gospels in the English language, with four learned commentaries upon them. At her funeral, Arundel, archbishop of York, in his sermon adverted to this circumstance, and expressed much surprise at it, as she was born an alien. The prelate added, that she had sent to him, for his inspection and judgment, her four English translations of the gospel, and that he had found them true and faithful. He confessed that it appeared to him a marvellous instance of godliness, that so great a lady would humbly condescend to study such excellent books: and he completed his encomium by declaring that he never knew a woman of such extraordinary piety. In the same sermon, he sharply rebuked the negligence of bishops and of others.

This relation may probably induce the reader to conjecture, that Arundel himself must have been almost a Lollard. At least he cannot but be both surprised and mortified to find, that shortly after the death of the good queen Ann, this same prelate, to the utmost of his power, stirred up the king to harass, throughout the whole kingdom, the very persons who should dare, in their native language, to read and study the gospels of Jesus Christ. Such inconsistencies are not uncommon in the annals of human nature.

About the same time, it is recorded, that several persons, who were accused of holding those speculative tenets of Wickliff which were said to be indefensible, did in their examinations perfectly clear themselves of every reasonable suspicion of factious innovation.† In fact, the whole body of the Lollards in general were in practice so perfectly void of offence, that speculative errors formed THE ONLY CHARGE that could be pretended against them. ONLY for the gospel's sake they suffered, whatever might be the pretences of their enemies.

In the year 1397 died John de Trevisa, a gentleman born at Crocadon, in Cornwall; a secular priest, and vicar of Berkeley; a man who translated many voluminous writings, and particularly the Bible, into the English language. Thomas, lord Berkeley, his patron, induced him to undertake the last-mentioned work. This nobleman appears to have had a regard for the written word of God,

* Fox, p 578.

† Ibid. p. 499, &c.

which was little read or known in that age. He had the Apocalypse, in Latin and French, inscribed on the walls of his chapel at Berkeley. Trevisa was also distinguished for his aversion to the monastic system. "Christ," said he, "sent apostles and presbyters, not monks and mendicant friars." He died in peace, almost ninety years old. Though neither this clergyman nor his patron are usually ranked among Lollards, yet do they seem to be sufficiently distinguished by their piety and veneration for the Scriptures to deserve a place in these memoirs. The period of history we are reviewing is not so fruitful in godliness as to allow us to pass over in silence such examples as these.*

Richard II. being deposed, Henry of Lancaster, the son of that same John of Gaunt who had patronised Wickliff, usurped the throne in the year 1399; and, shortly after, was crowned by Arundel, then archbishop of Canterbury. Both the king and the archbishop had demonstrated, by their conduct, that they were ready to sacrifice every thing to their ambition. It is not, therefore, matter of surprise, either that the murderer of king Richard should proceed to persecute, with extreme barbarity, the Lollards, whom his father had so zealously protected; or that the archbishop, who had supported the usurper in his iniquitous pretensions to the crown, should also concur with him in his plan to crush those reformers. The power of the hierarchy was formidable to all men; and every one, who thirsted after secular greatness, found himself obliged, by political necessity, which is the primary law of unprincipled men, to court that power, and to obey its most unreasonable commands. Thus influenced, Henry IV. and Arundel commenced a persecution more terrible than any which had ever been known under the English kings. **WILLIAM SAWTRE** was the **FIRST** man who was burnt in England for opposing the abominations of popery. He was a clergyman in London who openly taught the doctrines of Wickliff. And though, through the weakness of human nature, he had revoked and abjured those doctrines before the bishop of Norwich, he afterwards recovered so much strength of mind as to incur a second prosecution for his open confession of evangelical truth before the archbishop. Among other charges, which it would be tedious to recount, this was one; "he had declared, that

* Fuller's Church History, p. 151.

a priest was more bound to preach the word of God than to recite particular services at certain canonical hours.”* Such was the genius of the reigning superstition! The exposition of the word of God was looked on as a small matter, in comparison of the customary formalities. Sawtre, glorying in the cross of Christ, and strengthened by divine grace, was committed to the flames of martyrdom in the year of our Lord 1400.†

The name of John Badby, a humble and illiterate workman, well deserves to be recorded for the honour of divine truth. Arundel took serious pains to persuade him that the consecrated bread was really and properly the body of Christ. “After the consecration, it remaineth,”‡ said Badby, “the same material bread which it was before; nevertheless it is a sign or sacrament of the living God. I believe the omnipotent God in Trinity to be ONE. But if every consecrated host be the Lord’s body, then there are twenty thousand gods in England.” After he had been delivered to the secular power by the bishops, he was, by the king’s writ, condemned to be burnt. The prince of Wales, happening to be present, very earnestly exhorted him to recant, adding the most terrible menaces of the vengeance which would overtake him if he should continue in his obstinacy. Badby, however, was inflexible. As soon as he felt the fire he cried, “Mercy!” The prince, supposing that he was entreating the mercy of his judges, ordered the fire to be quenched. “Will you forsake heresy,” said young Henry; “and will you conform to the faith of the holy church? If you will, you shall have a yearly stipend out of the king’s treasury.” The martyr was unmoved; and Henry, in a rage, declared that he might now look for no favour. Badby gloriously finished his course in the flames.

It was a marvellous instance of the strength of Christ made perfect in weakness, and a striking proof that God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, that a simple artificer should sustain the most cruel torments with patience and serenity, not only in defence of divine truth, but also of common sense; while the most dignified characters in the kingdom, and among these the prince of Wales, afterwards the renowned Henry V., gloried in defending one of the most egregious absurdities

* Fox, p. 587.

† Wilkins, Convoc. p. 254—260.

‡ Fox, p. 594, and Wilkins, p. 326.

that ever disgraced the human understanding. What are all HIS victories and triumphs, of which English history is so proud, compared with the good sense and gracious spirit of John Badby!

The conflict was now grown serious, and Henry resolved to exercise the most rigorous measures of prevention, in order to repress all innovation, and to protect the established ecclesiastical system. Accordingly, he published a severe statute, by which grievous pains and penalties were to be inflicted on all, who should dare to defend or encourage the tenets of Wickliff; and this, in conjunction with a constitution of Arundel, too tedious* to be recited, seemed to threaten the total extinction of the heresy so called. The persecutors were extremely active; and many persons through fear recanted: but worthies were still found, who continued faithful unto death.

In the year 1413 died Henry IV. — His successor Henry V. trod in his steps, and countenanced Arundel, in his plans of extirpating the Lollards, and of supporting the existing hierarchy by penal coercion. In the first year of the new king's reign, this archbishop collected in St. Paul's church at London, a universal synod of all the bishops and clergy of England. The principal object of the assembly was to repress the growing sect; and as sir John Oldecastle, lord Cobham, had on all occasions discovered a partiality for these reformers, the resentment of the archbishop and of the whole body of the clergy was particularly levelled at this nobleman. Certainly, at that time, no man in England was more obnoxious to the ecclesiastics. For he made no secret of his opinions. He had very much distinguished himself in opposing the abuses of popery. At a great expense, he had collected, transcribed, and dispersed, the works of Wickliff among the common people, without reserve; and it was well known that he maintained a great number of itinerant preachers in many parts of the country, particularly in the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, London, and Hereford.†

But lord Cobham was a favourite both of the king and of the people; and therefore to effect his destruction was an undertaking that required much caution. The

* Wilkins, p. 314 Constitut. Arundel ex MS. Lamb.

† Fox, p. 635. Walden cont. Wiclev. Goodwin's Hen. V.

archbishop however was in earnest, and he concerted his measures with prudence.

His first step was to procure the royal mandate for sending commissioners to Oxford, whose business should be to examine and report the progress of heresy. These commissioners are, by Fox, not improperly called "the twelve inquisitors of heresies." The issue of their inquiries proved highly ungrateful to the hierarchy. They found Oxford overrun with heretics; they were, indeed, respectfully received by the rulers of the university, but the opinions of Wickliff had made their way among the junior students; and the talents and integrity of their master were held in high esteem and admiration by his disciples. This information, with many other minute particulars, Arundel laid before the grand convocation, who, after long debates, determined, that without delay, the lord Cobham should be prosecuted as a heretic. Him they considered as the great offender: to his influence they ascribed the growth of heresy: he was not only, they said, an avowed heretic himself; but, by stipends, encouraged scholars from Oxford to propagate his opinions, many of which were in direct opposition to the sentiments of the holy church of Rome; and lastly, he employed the disciples of Wickliff in preaching, though they had not obtained the licenses of their respective bishops for that purpose. With great solemnity a copy of each of Wickliff's works was publicly burnt, by the enraged archbishop, in the presence of the nobility, clergy, and people; and it happened that one of the books burnt on this occasion had belonged to lord Cobham. This circumstance tended much to confirm the assembly in their belief that that nobleman was a great encourager of the Lollards.*

At the moment when the convocation seemed almost in a flame, and were vowing vengeance against lord Cobham, some of the more cool and discreet members are said to have suggested the propriety of sounding how the young king would relish the measures they had in view, before they should proceed any further. Arundel instantly saw the wisdom of this advice, and he resolved to follow it.

For the purpose of giving weight to the proceedings, this artful primate, at the head of a great number of dignified ecclesiastics, complained most grievously to Henry,

* Fox, p. 636. Collier, p. 632. Wilkins, Concilia, p. 352.

of the heretical practices of his favourite servant lord Cobham, and entreated his majesty to consent to the prosecution of so incorrigible an offender.

The affections of the king appear to have been, in some measure, already alienated from this pious nobleman : Fox observes,* that he gently listened to those “ bloodthirsty prelates, and far otherwise than became his princely dignity.” But there is a circumstance which seems to have escaped the notice of this diligent searcher into ancient records. Through the management of the archbishop, the king’s mind was previously impressed with strong suspicions of lord Cobham’s heresy and enmity to the church. That very book above mentioned, which was said to belong to this excellent man, and which the convocation condemned to the flames, was read aloud before the king, the bishops, and the temporal peers of the realm : and the fragment of the account of these proceedings informs us, that Henry was exceedingly shocked at the recital ; and declared that, in his life, he never heard such horrid heresy.† However, in consideration of the high birth, military rank, and good services of sir John Oldcastle, the king enjoined the convocation to deal favourably with him, and to desist from all further process for some days : he wished to restore him to the unity of the church without rigour or disgrace ; and promised, that he himself, in the mean time, would send privately for the honourable knight, and endeavour to persuade him to renounce his errors.

The king kept his promise, and is said to have used every argument he could think of to convince him of the high offence of separating from the church ; and at last, to have pathetically exhorted him to retract and submit, as an obedient child to his holy mother. The answer of the knight is very expressive of the frank and open intrepidity which distinguished his character. “ You I am always most ready to obey,” said he, “ because you are the appointed minister of God, and bear the sword for the punishment of evil-doers. But, as to the pope and his spiritual dominion, I owe them no obedience, nor will I pay them any ; for as sure as God’s word is true, to me it is fully evident, that the pope of Rome is the great anti-christ foretold in Holy Writ, the son of perdition, the open

* Fox, *ibid.*

† Fragmentum Convoc. Cantuar. Arundel.

adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place." The extreme ignorance of Henry in matters of religion, by no means disposed him to relish such an answer as this: he immediately turned away from him in visible displeasure, and gave up the disciple of Wickliff to the malice of his enemies.*

Arundel, supported by the sovereign power, sent a citation to the castle of Cowling, where lord Cobham then resided. But feudal ideas were at that time no less fashionable than those of ecclesiastical domination. As a nobleman he availed himself of his privileges, and refused admission to the messenger. The archbishop then cited him,† by letters affixed to the great gates of the cathedral of Rochester; but lord Cobham still disregarded the mandate. Arundel, in a rage, excommunicated him for contumacy, and demanded the aid of the civil power to apprehend him.

Cobham, alarmed at length at the approaching storm, put in writing a confession of his faith, delivered it to the king, and entreated his majesty to judge for himself, whether he had merited all this rough treatment. The king coldly ordered the written confession to be delivered to the archbishop. Lord Cobham then offered to bring a hundred knights who would bear testimony to the innocence of his life and opinions. When these expedients had failed, he assumed a higher strain, and begged that he might be permitted, as was then usual in less matters, to vindicate his innocence by the law of arms. He said he was ready, "in the quarrel of his faith," to fight for life or death, with any man living, the king and the lords of his council excepted.

Nothing can be said by way of extenuating so gross an absurdity, except that he had been educated in the military habits of the fourteenth century. And such was the wretched state of society in the reign of Henry V., whose history we are accustomed to read with so much pride and admiration, that no method of defence remained for this Christian hero, but what was as contrary to all ideas of justice and equity, as that by which he was persecuted! In the issue, Cobham was arrested by the king's express order, and lodged in the tower of London. The very zealous and honest historian Fox,‡ gives the following account of his first examination.

* Fox, p. 636. Goodwin, Henry V.

† Citacio Arund. Wilkins, p. 329.

‡ Pages 638 and 639.

On the day appointed, Thomas Arundel, the archbishop, "sitting in Caiaphas' room, in the chapter-house of St. Paul's," with the bishops of London and Winchester, sir Robert Morley brought personally before him lord Cobham, and left him there for the time. "Sir," said the primate, "you stand here, both detected of heresies, and also excommunicated for contumacy. Notwithstanding, we have, as yet, neither shown ourselves unwilling to give you absolution, nor yet do to this hour, provided you would meekly ask for it."

Lord Cobham took no notice of this offer, but desired permission to read an account of his faith, which had long been settled, and which he intended to stand to. He then took out of his bosom a certain writing, respecting the articles whereof he was accused, and when he had read it, he delivered the same to the archbishop.

The contents of the paper were, in substance, these :

1. That the most worshipful sacrament of the altar is Christ's body in the form of bread.

2. That every man, who would be saved, must forsake sin, and do penance for sins already committed, with true and very sincere contrition.

3. That images might be allowable to represent and give men lively ideas of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the martyrdom and good lives of saints ; but, that if any man gave that worship to dead images which was due only to God, or put such hope or trust in the help of them as he should do in God, he became a grievous idolater.

4. That the matter of pilgrimages might be settled in few words. A man may spend all his days in pilgrimages, and lose his soul at last : but he, that knows the holy commandments of God and keepeth them to the end, shall be saved, though he never visited the shrines of saints, as men now do in their pilgrimages to Canterbury, Rome, and other places.

Then the archbishop informed the prisoner, that, though there were many good things contained in his paper, he had not been sufficiently explicit respecting several other articles of belief : and that upon these also his opinion would be expected. As a direction to his faith, he promised to send him, in writing, the clear determinations of the church ; and he warned him very particularly, to attend to this point ; namely, whether in the sacrament of the

altar, the material bread did, or did not, remain, after the words of consecration.

The gross superstition and unscriptural notions of the church at that time, are strikingly exhibited in this authentic determination of the primate and clergy, which, according to promise, was sent to the lord Cobham in the tower. It was as follows :—

1. The faith and determination of the holy church, touching the blissful sacrament of the altar, is this, that after the sacramental words be once spoken, by a priest in his mass, “ the material bread, that was before bread, is turned into Christ’s very body ; and the material wine, that was before wine, is turned into Christ’s very blood.” And so there remaineth, thenceforth, neither material bread, nor material wine, which were there before the sacramental words were spoken.

2. Every Christian man living here bodily on earth, ought to confess to a priest ordained by the church, if he can come to him.

3. Christ ordained St. Peter to be his vicar here on earth, whose see is the holy Church of Rome : and he granted that the same power, which he gave to Peter, should succeed to all Peter’s successors ; whom we now call popes of Rome ; . . . and whom Christian men ought to obey, after the laws of the church of Rome.

4. Lastly, holy church hath determined, that it is meritorious to a Christian man to go on a pilgrimage to holy places ; and there to worship holy relics and images of saints, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, approved by the Church of Rome.

On Monday, the day appointed for the next examination, Arundel accosted lord Cobham with an appearance of great mildness, and put him in mind, that on the preceding Saturday he had informed him, he was “ accursed for contumacy and disobedience to the holy Church ; ” and had expected he would at that time have meekly requested absolution. The archbishop then declared, that even now it was not too late to make the same request, provided it was made in due form, as the church had ordained.*

The trial of lord Cobham affords a remarkable and a very satisfactory evidence of the faith of the gospel exemplified in practice. This exemplary knight appears to have possessed the humility of a Christian, as well

* Fox, p. 639. Wilkins, p. 356.

as the spirit of a soldier: for, he not only faithfully protested against the idolatry of the times, the fictitious absolutions, and various corruptions of popery, by which the creatures of the pope extorted the greatest part of the wealth of the kingdom; but he also openly made such penitential declarations, and affecting acknowledgments of having personally broken God's commandments, as imply much spiritual self-knowledge and self-abasement, strong convictions of sin, and bitter sorrow for the same, together with a firm reliance on the mercy of God through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

"I never yet trespassed against you, said this intrepid servant of God; and therefore I do not feel the want of YOUR absolution" He then kneeled down on the pavement; and lifting up his hands to heaven, he said, "I confess myself here unto THEE, my eternal living God, that I have been a grievous sinner: how often in my frail youth have I offended thee by ungoverned passions, pride, concupiscence, intemperance! How often have I been drawn into horrible sin by anger, and how many of my fellow-creatures have I injured from this cause! Good Lord, I humbly ask thee mercy: here I need absolution."

With tears in his eyes, he then stood up, and with a loud voice cried out, "Lo! these are your guides, good people. Take notice; for the violation of God's holy law and his great commandments, they never cursed me: but, for their own arbitrary appointments and traditions, they most cruelly treat me and other men. Let them, however, remember, that Christ's denunciations against the Pharisees shall all be fulfilled."

The dignity of his manner, and the vehemence of his expression, threw the court into some confusion. After the primate had recovered himself, he proceeded to examine the prisoner respecting the doctrine of transubstantiation. "Do you believe, that after the words of consecration there remains any MATERIAL bread?" "The scriptures," said Cobham, "make no mention of MATERIAL bread; I believe, that Christ's body remains in the FORM of bread. In the sacrament there is both Christ's body and the bread: the bread is the thing that we see with our eyes; but the body of Christ is hid, and only to be seen by faith." * Upon which, with one voice, they cried,

* The learned reader cannot fail to observe, that both Wickliff and his followers seem sometimes to lean to the notion of consubstantiation, although not distinctly.

“Heresy! heresy!” One of the bishops, in particular, said vehemently, “That it was a foul heresy to call it bread!” Cobham answered smartly, “St. Paul, the apostle, was as wise a man as you, and perhaps as good a Christian; and yet he calls it BREAD. The bread, saith he, that we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? To be short with you; I believe the scriptures most cordially, but I have no belief in your lordly laws and idle determinations: ye are no part of Christ’s holy church, as your deeds do plainly show.” Doctor Walden, the prior of the Carmelites, and Wickliff’s great enemy, now lost all patience; and exclaimed, “What rash and desperate people are these followers of Wickliff!”

“Before God and man,” replied Cobham, “I solemnly here profess, that till I knew Wickliff, whose judgment ye so highly disdain, I never abstained from sin; but after I became acquainted with that virtuous man and his despised doctrines, it hath been otherwise with me; so much grace could I never find in all your pompous instructions.”

“It were hard,” said Walden, “that in an age of so many learned instructors, you should have had no grace to amend your life, till you heard the devil preach.”

“Your fathers,” said Cobham, “the old Pharisees, ascribed Christ’s miracles to Beelzebub, and his doctrines to the devil. Go on; and, like them, ascribe every good thing to the devil. Go on, and pronounce every good man a heretic, who rebukes your vicious lives. Pray, what warrant have you from scripture, for this very act you are now about? Where is it written in all God’s law, that you may thus sit in judgment upon the life of man? Hold—perhaps you will quote Annas and Caiaphas, who sat upon Christ and his apostles!”

“Yes, sir,” said one of the doctors of law, “and Christ too, for he judged JUDAS.”

“I never heard that he did,” said lord Cobham. “Judas judged himself, and thereupon went out and hanged himself. Indeed Christ pronounced a woe against him, for his covetousness, as he does still against you, who follow Judas’s steps.”

The examinations of lord Cobham are very prolix. We have, therefore, chosen to select such passages from the tedious accounts,* as might best indicate the real

* The very words are usually given; though sometimes, for the sake of brevity, only the substance; and sometimes a modern phrase is put in the place of one now antiquated.

dispositions of this confessor and martyr. Though intrepid and high spirited to the last, he appears not to have given his enemies any advantage over him, by using rude and coarse language, or by bursts of passion. The proud and ferocious spirit of an ill-educated soldier seems to have been melted down into the meekness and humility of the Christian. His reproof of his judges was severe, but perfectly just: his deep and animated confession of his sins is both affecting and instructive; and his bold testimony, in those trying moments, to the virtues and excellences of a character so obnoxious to his ecclesiastical judges as that of Wickliff, is exceedingly honourable to the memory both of the master and the scholar. We need not add, the same testimony covers their cruel and relentless adversaries with shame and disgrace.

We have seen that lord Cobham, in the process of his trial, hinted at the lessons of divine grace, which he had learnt in the school of Wickliff. The intimation is by no means obscure; yet every pious reader, at the same time that he is delighted with finding this evidence of the sound Christianity of Cobham, will lament to see, that there is not, on record, a larger and more distinct account both of his conversion, and of his private life and conversation. Such an account would give us a clearer insight into the religious character of this disciple of Wickliff, and might probably throw more light also on the practical tenets of that early reformer.

But we must be thankful for the documents we have. That distinct and impressive declaration of lord Cobham, concerning the change in his life from sin to the service of the living God, when we reflect on the awful and peculiar circumstances in which it was made, is in itself an inestimable fragment of ecclesiastical biography. This is that testimony of experience, which invincibly confirms every real Christian in the belief of the truth of the doctrine which he has been taught. He may be baffled in argument by men more acute and sagacious than himself; he may be erroneous in many less matters; he may want both learning and eloquence to defend that which he believes; but the doctrines of grace he knows to be of God, by the change which they have wrought in his soul. In this proof he knows all other views of religion, whether nominally Christian or not, do totally fail.

At the conclusion of this long and iniquitous trial, the
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behaviour of lord Cobham was perfectly consistent with the temper he had exhibited during the course of it. There remained the same undaunted courage and resolution, and the same christian serenity and resignation. Some of the last questions which were put to him respected the worship of the cross ; and his answers prove that the acuteness of his genius was not blunted, nor the solidity of his judgment impaired.

One of the friars asked him, whether he were ready to worship the cross upon which Christ died.

Where is it ? said lord Cobham.

But suppose it was here at this moment ? said the friar.

A wise man indeed, said Cobham, to put me such a question ; and yet he himself does not know where the thing is ! But tell me, I pray, what sort of worship do I owe to it ?

One of the conclave answered ; Such worship as St. Paul speaks of, when he says, “ God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Right, replied Cobham, and stretched out his arms ; THAT is the true and the very cross ; far better than your cross of wood.

Sir, said the bishop of London, you know very well that Christ died upon a MATERIAL CROSS.

True, said Cobham ; and I know also that our salvation did not come by that material cross, but by Him who died thereupon. Further, I know well that St. Paul rejoiced in no other cross but in Christ’s passion and death ONLY, and in his own sufferings and persecutions, for the same truth which Christ had died for before.*

Mr. Fox’s account of these transactions, collected from ancient manuscripts, does not, in general, differ materially from the archbishop’s own registers of the proceedings of the convocation. But there are some circumstances noted by Fox which we may well suppose to have been designedly omitted in the registers last mentioned. For example, Fox informs us that the court were so amazed at the spirit and resolution of the lord Cobham, as well as at the quickness and pertinence of his answers, that they were reduced to a stand, “ their wits and sophistry so failed them that day.”

From Arundel’s own reports it is sufficiently clear, that it was the custom of that artful primate to make, on these occasions, a great external show of lenity and kindness to

* Fox, p. 642. Convoc. prælat. Wilkins, p. 356.

the prisoners at the very moment in which he was exercising towards them the most unrelenting barbarity. I observe in the case of William Sawtre, whose martyrdom we have already concisely related,* that when the archbishop degraded that faithful clergyman, pronounced him an incorrigible heretic, and delivered him to the secular power, he then, with the most consummate hypocrisy, requested the mayor and sheriffs of London to treat their prisoner KINDLY,† though he well knew they would dare to show him no other kindness than that of burning him to ashes.

So in the trial of lord Cobham, nothing could exceed the mild and affable deportment of Arundel during the course of the examinations. The registers of Lambeth palace inform us, that the archbishop repeatedly made use of the most “gentle, modest, and sweet terms” in addressing the prisoner; that with mournful looks he entreated him to return into the bosom of the church; and that after he had found all his endeavours in vain, he was compelled with the bitterest sorrow to proceed to a definitive sentence.

“The day,” said Arundel, “passes away fast; we must come to a conclusion.” He then, for the last time, desired lord Cobham to weigh well the dilemma in which he stood: “You must either submit,” said he, “to the ordinances of the church, or abide the dangerous consequences.”

Lord Cobham then said expressly before the whole court, “My faith is fixed, do with me what you please.”

The primate, without further delay, judged, and pronounced sir John Oldcastle, the lord Cobham, to be an incorrigible, pernicious, and detestable heretic; and having condemned him as such, he delivered him to the secular jurisdiction.‡

Lord Cobham, with a most cheerful countenance, said, “Though ye condemn my body, which is but a wretched thing, yet I am well assured ye can do no harm to my soul, any more than could Satan to the soul of Job. He that created it will of his infinite mercy save it. Of this I have no manner of doubt. And in regard to the articles of my belief, I will, BY THE GRACE OF THE ETERNAL GOD,

* Page 123 of this vol.

† Wilkins, Concil. p. 260. Fox, p. 589.

‡ Rymer, vol. ix. p. 61—66. Fox, 642, 643.

stand to them, even to my very death." He then turned to the people, and stretching out his hands, cried with a very loud voice, " Good christian people ! for God's love be well aware of these men ; else they will beguile you, and lead you blindfold into hell with themselves." Having said these words, he fell down upon his knees, and, lifting up his hands and eyes to heaven, he prayed for his enemies in the following words : " Lord God eternal ! I beseech thee of thy great mercy to forgive my persecutors if it be thy blessed will !"

He was then sent back to the Tower, under the care of sir Robert Morley.

I was not surprised to find that, in Arundel's own report of this painful transaction, lord Cobham's prayer for his enemies is entirely omitted.* But the preceding address of this nobleman to the people, and his caution to them to beware of their blind guides, is, by the primate, placed immediately BEFORE the passing of the definitive sentence of condemnation. Fox, in his account, places that address immediately after the sentence, and seems to have thought Arundel's representation of this circumstance incorrect, for he pointedly tells us, that, respecting this very matter, his own two copies of these proceedings agreed with each other.†

Though the ecclesiastical judges of lord Cobham, by condemning him as a heretic, and delivering him to the secular power for the execution of their sentence, appear to have done their utmost to complete the destruction of the man whom they feared and hated, there is yet reason to believe that both the king and the archbishop remained in some perplexity respecting this business. In religious concerns this able monarch seems to have entirely resigned his understanding to the direction of the clergy ; and therefore we need not wonder that he was highly provoked with lord Cobham for his opposition to the church, and still more for his incurable obstinacy in adhering to heretical sentiments, after his sovereign had personally condescended to persuade him to recant. Yet, after all, it is not improbable that such a prince as Henry V. should still retain some esteem for the character of the prisoner in the Tower, who had formerly, on many occasions, distinguished himself by his valour and military talents. Though the memory of Henry is by no means

* Acta Convoc. prov. Cantuar. Arundel, 18. † Fox, p. 643.

free from the imputation of cruelty, it must at least be admitted, that the present situation of Cobham was likely to soften animosity, and to revive in the king's mind any latent affection for his favourite. Even Walsingham, a bigoted papist, and bitter enemy of the Lollards, though in many respects a very useful historian, says, that Cobham, "for his integrity, was dearly beloved by the king."*

This same ancient historian informs us that the archbishop in person went to the king, and requested his majesty to postpone, for the space of fifty days, the punishment of lord Cobham.† If this be true, the motives of Arundel can be no great mystery. The persecution of this virtuous knight was a most unpopular step. His rank and character, and his zeal for the doctrines of Wickliff, had pointed him out to the primate as a proper victim of ecclesiastical severity; but his condemnation involved, in a general odium, the rulers of the church who had been his judges. It was necessary, therefore, to temporize a little; and before the whole sect of the Lollards were to be terrified by the public execution of a person so highly esteemed as lord Cobham, it was thought expedient to employ a few weeks in lessening his credit among the people by a variety of scandalous aspersions. Fox assures us, that his adversaries scrupled not to publish a recantation in his name; and that lord Cobham directed a paper to be posted up in his own defence, and in contradiction to the slander.

But whether the lenity of the king, or the politic caution of the clergy, was the true cause of the delay, it is certain that lord Cobham was not put to death immediately after being condemned for a heretic. He remained some weeks in the Tower, and at length, by unknown means, made his escape: so that it is now impossible to say, whether the clergy would ultimately have pressed the sovereign to proceed to extremities in this instance, or whether Henry could have been induced to commit to the flames, for heresy, a favourite of such exalted rank and high reputation. For, as yet, there had not been any instance of a nobleman suffering in that ignominious manner.

After lord Cobham had escaped out of the Tower he is

* Regi propter probitatem charus et acceptus. Walsingham, Henry V.

† Page 385.

said to have taken the advantage of a dark night, evaded pursuit, and arrived safe in Wales, where he concealed himself more than four years.* If he had remained in prison, he would have effectually prevented the calumny with which the papists have endeavoured to load his memory; nevertheless, when we reflect on the intrepid spirit of the man, his unshaken resolution, and the cruel, unjust treatment he met with, we cannot wonder at his readiness to fly from those flames which his persecutors ardently longed to kindle. It seems as easy to comprehend lord Cobham's motives for wishing to escape, as it is difficult to censure them.

The clergy were not a little mortified to find that this grand heretic and destined victim had slipped out of their hands; and their uneasiness was increased by observing that the king discovered no anxiety to have lord Cobham retaken. Soon after this event, however, a very remarkable transaction afforded them every advantage they could wish, to gratify their resentment against the NOBLE CHIEF of the Lollards. These peaceable and truly christian subjects had been accustomed to assemble in companies for the purposes of devotion; but the bishops represented their meetings as of a seditious tendency, and they found no great difficulty in obtaining a royal proclamation† for suppressing the conventicles of persons who were supposed to be ill-inclined to the government. Historians have observed, that "jealousy was the ruling foible of the house of Lancaster;" and though Henry V. was naturally of a noble and magnanimous temper, he could never forget that he was an usurper: his suspicions of the evil designs of the Lollards increased to a high degree: he thought it necessary to watch them as his greatest enemies; and he appears to have listened to every calumny which the zeal and hatred of the hierarchy could invent or propagate against the unfortunate followers of Wickliff.

The royal proclamation, however, did not put an end to the assemblies of the Lollards. Like the primitive Christians, they met in SMALLER companies, and more privately, and often in the dead of night. St. Giles's Fields, then a thicket, was a place of frequent resort on these occasions. And here a number of them assembled in the evening of January the sixth, 1414, with an intention, as was usual, of continuing together to a very late hour.

* Bale. Gilpin.

† Rymer, vol. ix.

The king was then at Eltham, a few miles from London. He received intelligence that lord Cobham, at the head of twenty thousand of his party, was stationed in St. Giles's Fields, for the purpose of seizing the person of the king, putting their persecutors to the sword, and making himself the regent of the realm.

The mind of Henry, we have seen, had been prepared, by the diligent and artful representations of the clergy, to receive any impressions against the Lollards, which might tend to fix upon that persecuted sect the charges of seditious or treasonable practices. To his previous suspicions, therefore, as well as to the gallantry of his temper, we are to ascribe the extraordinary resolution which the king took on this occasion. He suddenly armed the few soldiers he could muster, put himself at their head, and marched to the place. He attacked the Lollards, and soon put them into confusion. About twenty were killed, and sixty taken.* Among these was one Beverley, their preacher, who, with two others, sir Roger Acton and John Brown, was afterwards put to death. The king marched on, but found no more bodies of men. He thought he had surprised only the advanced guard, whereas he had routed the whole army!!

This extraordinary affair is represented by the popish writers as a real conspiracy; and it has given them occasion to talk loudly against the tenets of the reformers, which could encourage such crimes. Hume also has enlisted himself on the same side of the question; and, in the most peremptory and decisive manner, has pronounced lord Cobham guilty of high treason!†

After what has been so lately observed concerning the lamentable prejudices of this historian, little more can now be necessary than barely to put the reader in mind, that Cobham and many of the Lollards evidently belonged to the true church of Christ, and bore with patience the cross of their Master. We may briefly add, that the ingenious, and on many occasions, the sceptical Hume, instead of affirming that "the treasonable designs of the sect were rendered certain, both from evidence and from the confession of the criminals themselves," would have done better to have recollected that the testimony of Walsingham, a violent partisan, merits, in this particular instance, very little attention. When I had reviewed Fox's able and

* Rapin Henry. V.

† Hume, Henry V.

satisfactory vindication of lord Cobham, I was astonished at the positiveness of Hume in this matter. The martyrologist, with great diligence and judgment, has examined all the authentic documents, and argued most powerfully against the supposition of any conspiracy. Hume, on the contrary, gives implicit credit to the most improbable accounts;* and he could not but know that the Lollards had not then a friend on earth.

Though the entire combination of the state and the hierarchy, in the reign of Henry V., against this religious sect, prevents us from being furnished with positive and direct proof of their innocence, the reader, after what has been stated, will be disposed, no doubt, to acquit them of all treasonable views in the affair of St. Giles's Fields. And this persuasion will be strengthened by considering that this is the only instance on record in which they have been accused of turbulent or seditious behaviour. The Lollards are described, in general, as having been always peaceable, and submissive to authority.

Rapin observes,† that the persons assembled on that occasion “had unhappily brought arms with them for their defence, in case they should be attacked by their persecutors.” If we regulate our judgments according to modern notions and habits, this circumstance must appear very suspicious; but not so, if we recollect that the practice of wearing arms for the purpose of self-defence was by no means an unusual custom in those times.

Neither ought much stress to be laid on the confession of several who were made prisoners by the king. Among those that were taken, says the historian last mentioned, there were some who “gained by promises, or awed by threats, confessed whatever their enemies desired.” Besides, it is extremely probable that popish emissaries mixed themselves among the Lollards for the express purpose of being brought to confession; and it has been well observed, that most likely the very persons who pretended to find arms on the field, could have best pointed out the original concealers of them.

Nothing can be more judicious than Rapin's observations on this whole transaction. “It is hardly to be conceived,” says this historian, “that a prince so wise as Henry, could suffer himself to be imposed on by so gross

* Such are the accounts of Hall, &c.

† History of England, Henry V.

a fiction. Had he found, indeed, as he was made to believe, twenty thousand men in arms in St. Giles's Fields, it would have been very suspicious ; but that fourscore or a hundred men, among whom there was not a single person of rank, should have formed such a project as that of seizing the king's person, is extremely improbable. Besides, he himself knew sir John Oldcastle to be a man of sense ; and yet nothing could be more wild than the project fathered upon him ; a project which it was supposed he was to execute with a handful of men without being present himself, and without its being known where he was, or that there was any other leader in his room. Notwithstanding the strictest search made through the kingdom to discover the accomplices of this pretended conspiracy, not a SINGLE person could be found besides those taken at St. Giles's. Lastly, but not least, the principles of the Lollards were very far from allowing such barbarities. It is, therefore, more than probable that the accusation was forged, to render the Lollards odious to the king, with a view to gain his license for their persecution."

The conduct of those in power in the hierarchy at that time, was so completely flagitious and unprincipled, that it is impossible to review their usual mode of proceeding against those whom they termed heretics, without entertaining suspicions similar to those which have occurred to Rapin ; suspicions of forged accusations and of pretended or extorted confessions. This consideration adds much weight to the solid reasonings of this very candid and upright historian.

It has been supposed that, in process of time, the king disbelieved the report of any actual conspiracy in this transaction : and it must be confessed, that when we reflect on the great understanding and military skill of this prince, it seems extraordinary that he should not at first have reflected that the very marshalling of such a number of soldiers, and the furnishing of them with necessaries, could never have been managed with secrecy. He appears, however, to have given sufficient credit to the calumny to answer all the designs of the ecclesiastical rulers. He became thoroughly incensed against the Lollards, and particularly against the lord Cobham. A bill of attainder against that unfortunate nobleman passed the commons

through the royal influence :* the king set a price of a thousand marks upon his head, and promised a perpetual exemption from taxes to any town that should secure him. †

It was to be expected that these strong measures, aided by the active zeal and unrelenting hatred of his enemies, should be effective to the discovery of lord Cobham : and it is matter of some surprise how he was able, for several years, to elude the vigilance of the many who narrowly watched him. Wales was his asylum ; and he is supposed to have frequently changed the scene of his retreat. Through the diligence of lord Powis and his dependents he was, at length, discovered and taken. It was on the tenth of October, 1413, that lord Cobham was, by Arundel, condemned as a heretic and sent to the Tower. The affair of St. Giles's happened on the evening of the sixth of January, 1414 ; and it was not till nearly the end of the year 1417, that this persecuted christian was apprehended and brought to London.

His fate was soon determined. He was dragged into St. Giles's Fields with all the insult and barbarity of enraged papal superstition ; and there, both as a traitor and a heretic, he was suspended alive in chains upon a gallows, and burned to death, with circumstances of aggravated and disgusting cruelty.

This excellent man, by a slight degree of dissimulation, might have softened his adversaries, and have escaped a troublesome persecution and a cruel death. But sincerity is essential to a true servant of Jesus Christ ; and lord Cobham died, as he had lived, in the faith and hope of the gospel ; and bearing to the end a noble testimony to its genuine doctrines ; “ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” ‡

One of lord Cobham's very great admirers has said, that the novelty of Wickliff's opinions first engaged his curiosity ; that he examined them as a philosopher, and in the course of his examination became a christian.

I know not upon what ground this is affirmed ; but it might be so ; nevertheless, I feel assured that if we had lord Cobham's own account of his conversion, this representation of the matter would appear at least very defec-

* Gilpin.

† Rapin. Rymer.

‡ Heb. xi. 25.

tive; moreover, from the little which he did say on his trial, respecting Wickliff's doctrines, and from the very feeling manner in which he appears to have delivered that little,* I think it extremely probable, that the preaching and expounding of the true gospel of Christ by Wickliff and his disciples, had been the means of affecting the CONSCIENCE of this worthy personage, and of convincing him of sin. This has been found the usual way in which the Spirit of God operates salutary changes on the minds of fallen creatures. The philosophical method has a plausible appearance, but fails in practice.

Lord Cobham is allowed to have been a man of learning; and his knowledge of the holy Scriptures is incontestable. The aptness of his quotations, and his promptitude in producing scriptural arguments, were displayed in a very striking manner through the whole course of his examination before the bishops. At the time when he was seized and made prisoner in Wales, Henry V. was making conquests in Normandy; and a parliament was then sitting in London for the purpose of supplying the sovereign with money to carry on his wars. The records of that parliament inform us, that on the eighteenth of December, 1417, sir John Oldcastle was brought before the lords, and that he made no answer to the crimes laid to his charge.† No doubt he was thoroughly convinced, that all attempts to exculpate himself would be vain and fruitless. The clergy, during the last three or four years, had gained a complete ascendancy both in parliament and in the cabinet; Arundel died in 1414; and was succeeded by Chicheley, who soon showed himself to be a primate, both of more art and ability, and also of more zeal and courage, than his predecessor. Ecclesiastical tyranny and superstition seemed now at their height; and it required much less sagacity than that of lord Cobham, to see that in the present circumstances, any witnesses, which he could produce, would be overawed or disregarded amidst the imprecations of the priests and monks; and that a close and cruel confederacy of power, prejudice, and resentment, would be impenetrable to argument and eloquence.

It was now, therefore, become the duty of lord Cobham patiently to resign himself to the will of his Maker, and to seek for comfort by meditations on the sacred

* Page 132 of this vol.

† Cotton's Abridgment.

Scriptures. That he did so, I collect with no small satisfaction from a single expression of the ancient memorialist Walsingham, which does not appear to have been taken notice of by succeeding writers. This author informs us, that the prisoner was examined in the presence of the duke of Bedford, then regent of England ; and being pressed closely to give answers respecting the insurrection in St. Giles's Fields, and his other treasonable offences, his reply, after a short pause, was, " With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment :"* and then, says the scornful annalist, he again proceeded to PRATE IMPERTINENTLY.†

Yet this, the reader should remember, is the very author on whose assertions, principally, Hume grounded his assertion that lord Cobham was guilty of treason. We have before observed‡ that, on that question, the historian appears to have been credulous in the extreme ; and, as he had no great taste for scriptural quotations, it is by no means improbable that he also further agreed with Walsingham in blaming the prisoner for his " impertinent garrulity." Serious persons, however, who listen with deference to the written word of God, will view the matter in a different light. That such a passage of scripture should have been actually quoted by lord Cobham, then in the power of enraged and merciless adversaries, seems to be extremely likely ; and not the less so because recorded by Walsingham, a violent and prejudiced enemy of all the Lollards. In regard to the quotation itself, by suggesting the littleness and insignificance of all HUMAN judgments and determinations, in comparison of the DIVINE, it conveyed a wise and salutary admonition to the existing hierarchy, who, at that moment, were uncommonly inflated with dominion and " drunken with the blood of the saints : "§ and at the same time it must have produced in the minds of all, WHO HAD EARS TO HEAR, a strong conviction of this important truth, that the knight who was thus persecuted for righteousness' sake had made no rash choice in renouncing the love of the world, and thereby demonstrating that the love of the Father was in him.|| Every pious Christian will, I doubt not, accord with me in

* 1 Cor. iv. 3.

† Et iterum impertinenter garrulare cæpit, donec . . . Walsingham, p. 400.

‡ Page 140.

§ Rev. xvii. 6.

|| John ii. 15.

these ideas; and be gratified to find, that "MAN'S JUDGMENT," however severe and cruel, was "a very small thing," in lord Cobham's estimation; and that when all earthly supports must have failed, this martyr for the gospel of Christ steadily fixed his eye on GOD'S JUDGMENT, and derived all his hope and comfort from that single source.

At the time of his execution many persons of rank and distinction were present; and the ecclesiastics are said to have laboured to the utmost to prevent the people from praying for him. Lord Cobham, however, resigned himself to a painful and ignominious death, "with the utmost bravery and most triumphant joy, exhorting the people to follow the instructions which God had given them in the Scriptures; and to disclaim those false teachers, whose lives and conversation were so contrary to Christ and his religion."*

Henry Chicheley, now archbishop of Canterbury, continued at the head of that see from February 1414 to April 1443.† This man deserves to be called the firebrand of the age in which he lived. To subserve the purposes of his own pride and tyranny, he engaged king Henry V. in his famous contest with France, by which a prodigious carnage was made of the human race, and the most dreadful miseries were brought upon both kingdoms. But Henry was a soldier, and understood the art of war, though perfectly ignorant of religion; and that ardour of spirit which, in youth, had spent itself in vicious excesses, was now employed, under the management of Chicheley, in desolating France by one of the most unjust wars ever waged by ambition, and in furnishing for vulgar minds matter of declamation on the valour of the English nation. While this scene was carrying on in France, the archbishop at home, partly by exile, partly by forced abjurations, and partly by the flames, domineered over the Lollards; and almost effaced the vestiges of godliness in the kingdom.

This was one of the most gloomy seasons which the church ever experienced. The doctrines of Wickliff, indeed, had travelled into Bohemia; but, as we shall afterwards see, the fires of persecution were also lighted up in that country, at the same time that in England, no quarter

* Lewis's account of Wickliff's followers.

† Biograph. Britan. Henry's Hist. b. v.

was given to any professors of the pure religion of Christ. Even the duke of Bedford, the brother of the king,* one of the wisest men of his age, thought it no dishonour to be the minister of Chicheley's cruelties. A chaplain of lord Cobham, through terror of punishment, was induced to recant his creed: the strictest search was made after Lollards and their books; and while a few souls, dispersed through various parts, sighed in secret, and, detesting the reigning idolatry, worshipped God in spirit and in truth, they yet found no HUMAN consolation or support whatever. The principal use to be made of these scenes is to excite a spirit of thankfulness for the superior privileges of the times in which we live.

The diocese of Kent was particularly exposed to the bloody activity of Chicheley. Whole families were obliged to relinquish their places of abode for the sake of the gospel.

In the midst of these tragedies, and in the year 1422, died Henry V., whose military greatness is known to most readers. His vast capacity and talents for government have been also justly celebrated. But what is man without the genuine fear of God? This monarch, in the former part of his life, was remarkable for dissipation and extravagance of conduct; in the latter, he became the slave of the popedom; and for that reason was called the PRINCE OF PRIESTS. Voluptuousness, ambition, superstition, each in their turn had the ascendancy in this extraordinary character. Such, however, is the dazzling nature of personal bravery and of prosperity, that even the ignorance and folly of the bigot, and the barbarities of the persecutor, are lost or forgotten amidst the enterprises of the hero and the successes of the conqueror. Reason and justice lift up their voice in vain. The great and substantial defects of Henry V. must hardly be touched on by Englishmen. The battle of Agincourt throws a delusive splendour around the name of this victorious king.

The persecution of the Lollards continued during the minority of Henry VI. William Taylor, a priest, was burnt, because he had asserted, that every prayer, which is a petition for some supernatural gift, is to be directed only to God.† The four orders of friars were directed by the archbishop to examine him; and they declared him guilty

* Fox, p. 729

† Ibid. p. 749.

of heresy, for asserting a maxim, which peculiarly distinguishes true religion from idolatry.

Not to dwell on the cases of many persons of less note, who suffered much vexation in this calamitous period of the church, it may be proper to mention William White, who, by reading, writing, and preaching,* exerted himself in Norfolk so vigorously, that he was condemned to the stake in 1424. His holy life and blameless manners had rendered him highly venerated in that county. He attempted to speak to the people before his execution, but was prevented. It is remarkable, that his widow, following her husband's footsteps in purity of life and in zeal for the Gospel, confirmed many persons in evangelical truth; on which account she was exposed to much trouble from the bishop of Norwich.

Nor did the civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, which filled the whole kingdom with confusion, put an end to the persecution of the Lollards. A person, named John Gooze, was burnt at the Tower-hill, in the reign of Edward IV. in the year 1473.† This victim was delivered to one of the sheriffs, with an order to have him executed in the afternoon. The officer, compassionating the case of the prisoner, took him to his own house, and endeavoured to prevail on him to retract. But the martyr, after listening to a long exhortation, desired him to forbear, and then, in strong terms, requested something to eat, declaring he was become very hungry. The sheriff complied with his request. "I eat now a good dinner," said the man very cheerfully, "for I shall have a brisk storm to pass through before supper." After he had dined, he gave thanks to God, and desired to be led to the place, where he should give up his soul to his Creator and Redeemer.

The civil contests, with which the kingdom was convulsed, were at length terminated by the union of the two houses of York and Lancaster, at the accession of Henry VII. But the Church of God continued still an object of unremitted persecution. The sufferings of the Lollards were even greater during the established governments of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. than they had been during the civil wars. To give a minute detail of all the horrid cruelties, that were inflicted on those who were condemned as heretics for reading the Scriptures, and for denying

* Fox, p. 752.

† Ibid. p. 814.

popish superstitions, is not the object of these memoirs. Children were compelled to accuse their parents, and parents their children, and the nearest and dearest friends and relatives constrained to inform against each other. In one instance where a man named Tylsworth was burned at Amersham, his own daughter was dragged to the spot, and forced to set fire to the pile! It may be sufficient to remark, that all who were convicted of what was then called heresy, and adhered to their opinions, were first condemned as obstinate heretics, afterwards delivered to the secular arm, and lastly burnt to ashes, without mercy, and without exception.* Neither age nor sex were spared. Fox has collected, from the registers of the diocese of Lincoln, for the year 1521, a most shocking catalogue, both of the accusers and of the victims, who suffered under the grievous and cruel persecution of bishop Langland, the king's confessor. He has also, with singular industry, recorded the particular names of many, who, through fear of a painful death, renounced their faith during the memorable persecution of that same year. Upon these unfortunate persons, various penances, and many very severe and ignominious punishments, were inflicted. Several, who were found to have abjured before, were condemned for relapsing, and committed to the flames.†

A concise account of a person named John Brown of Ashford, in Kent, shall conclude this distressing detail of the sufferings of the Lollards.

This martyr suffered in the year 1511, under the persecution of William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury. He was discovered to be a heretic, as follows.‡ Brown, happening to sit close to a priest on board a Gravesend barge, was rebuked by an inquiry, "Dost thou know who I am? Thou sittest too near me; thou sittest on my clothes." "No, sir," said Brown; "I know not what you are." "I tell thee, I am a priest." "What, sir, are you a parson, a vicar, or a lady's chaplain?" "No," said the priest, "I am a soul priest; I sing for souls;" meaning that he was one who sang mass for the deliverance of the souls of deceased persons from Purgatory. "I pray you, sir," said Brown, "where do you find the soul when you go to mass?" "I cannot tell thee," said the priest. "I pray you, where do you leave it, sir, when

* Henry's Hist. of Britain.

† Fox, p. 551.

the mass is done?" "I cannot tell thee," again replied the priest. "Then you can neither tell where you find it when you go to mass, nor where you leave it when the mass is done; how then can you save the soul?" inquired Brown. "Go thy way," said the priest; "thou art a heretic, and I will be even with thee."

As soon as they landed, the priest took with him two gentlemen, named Walter and William More, and going to archbishop Warham, they informed against John Brown as a heretic. Three days afterwards, as Brown was bringing a mess of pottage to table for some guests who dined with him upon the occasion of his wife having been churched that same day, he was apprehended by the bishop's servants, who entered the house suddenly, and put him upon his own horse, tying his feet under its belly: they carried him to Canterbury, where he remained in confinement forty days; during which time neither his wife, nor any of his friends, could receive the smallest information concerning him.

At length he was brought to Ashford, the town where he lived, and placed in the stocks. It was now almost night; but one of his own female domestics, in passing by the place, happened to become acquainted with his situation; and she instantly carried home to her mistress the afflicting news. His mournful wife sat near her husband all the night, and heard him relate the melancholy story of every thing that had happened to him. The treatment this good man had met with from Warham, the archbishop of Canterbury, and from Fisher,* bishop of Rochester, was infamous in the extreme. With extreme barbarity, they had directed his

* Fisher was born at Beverley in Yorkshire, in 1459. He was educated at Cambridge, and became Master or President of Queen's College in that University. He was made bishop of Rochester in 1504. It was during the time of his presidentship that Erasmus came to study at Cambridge, and took up his residence at Queen's College. This prelate was beheaded by Henry VIII. in 1535, for denying the king's supremacy, and for speaking with freedom in behalf of the queen. The pope was so pleased with his conduct, that, even while Fisher was confined in the Tower and attainted of high treason, he made him a cardinal, and sent him the proper hat belonging to that dignity. Henry was so much provoked, that he would not permit the hat to be brought into the kingdom: he also sent Cromwell to sound bishop Fisher, whether he intended to accept it. "Yes," said Fisher. The king then exclaimed with an oath, "Well, let the pope send him the hat when he pleases, he shall wear it on his shoulders, for I will leave him never a head to set it on." The king was as good as his word, and caused him to be executed as a traitor.

bare feet to be placed upon hot burning coals, and to be kept there till they were burnt to the bones. Notwithstanding all this, Brown would not deny his faith, but patiently endured the pain, and continued immovable, fighting manfully the "good fight." To his wife he then said, "The bishops, good Elizabeth, have burnt my feet till I cannot set them on the ground: they have done so to make me deny my Lord: but, I thank God, they will never be able to make me do that: for, if I should deny HIM in this world, he would deny me hereafter. Therefore, I pray thee, continue as thou hast begun, and bring up thy children in the fear of God. Thy husband is to be consumed at the stake to-morrow."

He was burnt on Whitsun-even, while lifting up his hands, and uttering the most fervent prayers, particularly the words of the Psalmist, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth."*

Such were the sanguinary methods by which the prelates of England attempted to extirpate Lollardism and heresy. And they so far succeeded, that the disciples of Wickliff, who still remained alive, seem to have been afterwards confounded with the favourers of the GRAND REFORMATION; but in their main object of strengthening the Roman Catholic religion, they utterly failed. The burning of heretics was found to be not the way to extinguish heresy. On the contrary, both in England and on the continent, such detestable cruelty increased the compassion of the people for the sufferers, excited their indignation against the persecutors, and roused a spirit of inquiry and of opposition to the existing hierarchy, which at length, under the direction of a kind, overruling Providence, proved fatal both to papal corruptions of sound doctrine, and also to papal usurpation of dominion in many countries.

When the human mind has been thus fatigued and disgusted with a review of the cruelties of popish persecutors, it is disposed to pronounce the Romish religion wholly a pretence, and all the ecclesiastical judges and rulers of those times, barbarous hypocrites and deceivers. "It is impossible," we are apt to say, "but that natural conscience should have informed them they were doing wrong, in committing to the flames, for slight differences of opinion, so many innocent victims; nay, often, persons of the

* Fox tells us he had this account from Brown's own daughter,

most exemplary life and conversation.” However, a more cool and sedate reflection may convince us, that though, in all ages, there have existed wicked men of great ability, who have shown themselves ever ready to sacrifice principle and conscience to their ambition and avarice, and even to wade through much blood in support of their darling objects, yet ALL tormentors of the human race have not been precisely of this class. These are of the first magnitude, and we suppose them to have had their eyes open. But there are others, who knew not what they did;* and towards such, therefore, though we are never to palliate their faults, much less to defend their enormities, yet are we bound to exercise an equitable discrimination. The reader will understand me to have in view, those deluded votaries, who have had the misfortune to be taught, and the weakness to believe, that the favour of God is to be obtained, chiefly by paying a scrupulous regard to external forms and observances.—The following remarkable paragraph is extracted from a popish writer ;† and will serve to explain my meaning still further.

“ The disciples of Wickliff are men of a serious, modest deportment ; avoiding all ostentation in dress, mixing little with the busy world, and complaining of the debauchery of mankind. They maintain themselves wholly by their own labour, and utterly despise wealth ; being fully content with bare necessities. They follow no traffic, because it is attended with so much lying, swearing, and cheating. They are chaste and temperate ; are never seen in taverns, or amused by the trifling gaieties of life. You find them always employed ; either learning or teaching. They are concise and devout in their prayers ; blaming an unanimated prolixity. They never swear ; speak little ; and in their public preaching they lay the chief stress on charity. They never mind canonical hours, because, they say, that a paternoster or two, repeated with devotion, is better than tedious hours spent without devotion. They explain the Scriptures in a different way from the holy doctors and church of Rome. They speak little, and humbly, and are well behaved in appearance.”

This abstract is not produced as a proof of the candour of a Roman Catholic, but of his wretched standard of virtue and holiness. For these excellences of character in the followers of Wickliff, are not here mentioned by the author

* Luke xxiii. 34.

† Sancho Reinher.

in terms of approbation, but, on the contrary, are noted by him, as the distinguishing marks of a heretical people. So little, in the times of Wickliff and his followers, had the popish religion to do with morals and with the heart.

Though this and many other similar testimonies, which might be adduced, from popish authors, in proof of the innocence and virtues of the heretics, may satisfy us that all the persecutors of the godly were not deceivers and hypocrites, in the gross sense of those terms, yet we must remember, as indeed has already been intimated, that the distinctions we would establish, still only serve to show that the sufferings of the righteous, during the period we are reviewing, are to be ascribed to the guilt and wickedness in the hearts of such as inflicted those sufferings. Far be it from us to pretend to exculpate, in the smallest degree, the perpetrators of any of the various and horrid crimes related in this chapter. Rather let St. Peter's example direct our judgments. That apostle thought it right to suggest to the Jews, that their case would have been worse, if, what they did, had not been done in ignorance; yet he in no wise excuses them; he tells them plainly, that they had denied the Holy One, and killed the Prince of Life, and had preferred a murderer to him;* and in the preceding chapter he directly accuses them of having taken Jesus of Nazareth, and by WICKED HANDS crucified and slain him.

The Romish authors are not the only ones who have endeavoured to palliate these scenes of persecution. But a reference to one of these writers will suffice to show the superior weight of evidence against them. In the preceding account the grievous persecutions by bishop Langland or Longland, are briefly mentioned. Mr. Collier, in his Ecclesiastical History, after allowing that several abjured, and that six actually suffered, observes, that these men were accused for reading the New Testament in English; and why, says he, was this so great a crime? Because it was WICKLIFF's translation, and condemned by the church. The English clergy did not believe this translator had reached the original, and rightly expressed the mind of the Holy Ghost. . . . They were careful to prevent the spreading of Lollardism, and we need not wonder.†

It is quite painful to see an English writer undertake to

* Acts iii. 14, 15.

† Collier, vol. ii. p. 11.

speak thus in mitigation of the abominable cruelties of the papists in those times; and his observation respecting Wickliff's translation does not require any notice.

But further; he does not believe that "six men and a woman were burnt at Coventry, for teaching their children the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments, and the creed in the vulgar tongue;" and he expresses a hope that bishop Burnet, who mentions the fact in his *History of the Reformation*, was misinformed. "The learned historian," says he, "cites Fox for his authority. But this looks like a lame story, for Fox cites no other authority than one Mother Hall."

On reading the above, I was curious to see what Fox actually DOES SAY: and here I shall transcribe his very words, without making any observation on them. "The WITNESSES of this history," says he, "be yet alive, which both SAW THEM and KNEW THEM. OF WHOM ONE is Mother Hall, dwelling now in Baginton, two miles from Coventry. By whom also this is testified of them, that they above all other in Coventry pretended most show and worship of devotion at the holding up of the sacrament; whether to colour the matter or no, it is not known."—Is it possible for an historian more distinctly to refer to indisputable authority?*

Mr. Fox speaks of the zeal of the holy men in those times of persecution in the most glowing terms: "To see their travails, their earnest seeking, their burning zeal, their readings, watchings, their sweet assemblies, their love and concord, their godly living, their faithful marrying with the faithful, may make us now in these our days of free profession to blush for shame."†

* Fox, vol. ii. p. 182.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 23.

The reader will find the MOST CORRECT account of these persecutions in Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, a work respecting which a recent ecclesiastical writer, after stating that John Fox is one of the most faithful and authentic of all historians, adds, "All the many remarks and discoveries of later times have only contributed to place the general fidelity and truth of Fox's melancholy narrative on a rock which cannot be shaken." *Pref. to Wordsworth's Ecc. Biog.*

CHAP. II.

THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE ;

INCLUDING THE CASES OF JOHN HUSS, AND JEROM OF PRAGUE.

THIS celebrated council did not make any essential reformation in religion : on the contrary, they persecuted men who truly feared God ; and they tolerated all the predominant corruptions. Their labours, therefore, do not deserve to be recorded, on account of the piety of those who composed the council. Yet the transactions at Constance serve to illustrate the character of John Huss, and of Jerom ; and they afford various instructive reflections to those, who love to attend to the dispensations of Divine Providence, and would understand the comparative power of nature and of grace, of mere human resources, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit.

The council met in the year 1414. The necessity of the times had called aloud for an assembly of this kind.* Ecclesiastical corruptions had increased to an intolerable magnitude, and the hierarchy had been distracted, nearly forty years, by a schism in the popedom. To settle this dispute, and restore peace to the church, was the most urgent concern of the council. Three pretenders to the chair of St. Peter severally laid claim to infallibility. The very nature of their struggle was subversive of the authority to which each of them made pretensions ; and “ of their vain contest there seemed no end.” The princes, statesmen, and rulers of the church, in those times, wanted not discernment to see the danger to which the whole ecclesiastical system was exposed by these contentions ; but it seems never to have come into the minds of them, or of any of the members of the council, to examine the foundation on which the popedom itself was erected. THAT, on all sides, was looked on as sacred and inviolable, though allowed to be burdened and incumbered with innumerable abuses.

However, they deposed the three existing popes, and chose a fresh successor of St. Peter, Martin V., and we are

* L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance.—It is foreign to my design to follow this author through the details of his very accurate and circumstantial narration. The affairs, however, of John Huss and Jerom, deserve a minute attention.

to remark a providential benefit, which arose from the accomplishment of this first object of the council; namely, that while THEY had their eye only on the restoration of the unity of the Roman see, they were led to decree the superiority of councils over popes. Thus a deep wound was given to the tyrannical hierarchy, which proved of considerable service to those real Reformers who arose about a hundred years after the council of Constance.

The members of this council universally confessed, that reformation and discipline ought to be prosecuted with vigour. But they were not real reformers; they brought not to the council the materials which only could qualify them for such a work. In general, the best individuals among them were merely moralists; had some "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge;" and knew no higher principles than the voice of natural conscience, the dictates of common sense, and some information concerning the preceptive part of Christianity. Their system of religion was letter, not spirit; law, not gospel. They had some degree of insight into the distemper of human nature, little or none into the remedy. To promote the recovery of depraved mankind, they knew no methods but those of moral suasion, upon principles merely natural. The original depravity of man, salvation through the atonement of a Redeemer, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, were doctrines, the use and efficacy of which they did not understand: yet, these are the ONLY EFFECTUAL INSTRUMENTS for the reformation either of a corrupted church, or of a corrupted individual, though they are, by the world, generally suspected to be productive of enthusiasm, and are also too often professed by men of counterfeit religion.

A hundred years after the council of Constance a reformation was attempted, and carried on with permanent success, by men furnished with truly evangelical views and materials. But the members of this celebrated council undertook to make "brick without straw;" and their projects of reform served only, in the event, to teach posterity that the real doctrines of the gospel ought to be distinctly known, cordially relished, and powerfully experienced, by those who undertake to enlighten mankind; and that, without them, the united efforts of the wisest and most dignified personages in Europe, for such were those assembled at Constance, will evaporate in the smoke

of fair words and speeches, and of promising, but inefficient and unsubstantial schemes.

A moment's attentive consideration may convince us that this must unavoidably be the case. How could it be expected in the instance before us that popes and cardinals, bishops and clergy, would enact, and, what is still more, would execute, laws which bore hard on their own pride, their sloth, and their love of gain? Or, that the laity, noble or vulgar, would submit to strict rules of church discipline? Nothing but the principles of faith in a crucified Redeemer wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and working by that love which is shed abroad in the heart by him, could effect these things. I need not put the reader in mind how ignorant, in general, in regard to these things, men were in the fifteenth century. And hence we are no more to wonder at the failure of the attempts of the council of Constance, than at the inefficacy of the complaints, made from age to age, of the wickedness of men, both by philosophers of old, and by nominal Christians in our own times, while those, who complain and even endeavour to effect reforms, are destitute of real christian perceptions, and regard no other light than that of mere nature. Thus the institution of mere laws, however good, "can never give life;"* "the motions of sin by the law work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."† If even the best characters among the numerous congregation at Constance thus failed, through ignorance of the true method of relieving human evils, we need not be surprised that those who were actuated by bad motives should contribute nothing towards a real reformation. The consequence was, that the prevailing abuses remained in the church in full force. The council, however, managed to restore unity to the popedom;‡ and THAT which men attempted in vain by methods merely human, God himself, about a century afterwards, effected, by the foolishness of preaching,§ and by his own Spirit of grace.

It was proposed, that the bishops and other pastors should be compelled to reside in their cathedrals and parishes, to visit their flocks, to renounce pluralities, and to preach the word of God themselves, instead of committing that charge to ignorant or profane priests. Amendments truly just and laudable! But those who

* Gal. iii.

† Rom. vii.

‡ L'Enfant.

§ 1 Cor i.

proposed these excellent things were themselves of a high degree proper objects of censure. Some of the orators of the council declared, that "they strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel." In fact, several little punctilios were reformed; but, as we have just observed, all the substantial evils remained.

There can be no doubt but they ought to have begun with Christian doctrine itself, and its influence on the heart, if they had expected success.

The knights of the Teutonic order, at this time, ranged through all their own neighbourhood with fire and sword, under the pretence of converting infidels, and had been justly complained of by the king of Poland; yet this council supported them in their enormities; nor would they even condemn a libel written by a monk, who had exhorted all Christians to murder that monarch, and to massacre the Poles. John Petit, a friar, had publicly vindicated the assassination committed by the duke of Burgundy's order on the duke of Orleans, brother to the king of France. It may seem incredible, but it is true, that the king of France, who prosecuted this friar before the council of Constance, could not procure his condemnation! All the dignified orders in Europe, there assembled together, had not sufficient spirit and integrity to punish crimes of the most atrocious nature committed by an ecclesiastic. Yet they could burn without mercy those whom they deemed heretics, though men of real godliness. This part of the conduct of the assembly particularly deserves our attention; and still more so, if we keep constantly in mind who the members were that composed it. Italy, France, Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, England, Denmark, Sweden, were represented by deputies: four electors were present, namely, those of Mentz, and Saxony, the elector Palatine, and the burgrave of Nuremberg, who there received the electoral cap; besides envoys from the other electors: the emperor Sigismund was never absent, unless employed in the express business of the council: many other German princes were present, besides the clergy, among whom were twenty archbishops, nearly one hundred and fifty bishops, about one hundred and fifty other ecclesiastics of rank, and more than two hundred doctors.

After this general review it may now be proper to lay before the reader a connected view of the proceedings of

this council, chiefly in regard to those subjects which relate to the concerns of the real church of Christ.

At the opening of the council of Constance, pope John XXIII. and the emperor Sigismund were at the head of it; and they continually endeavoured to baffle the views of each other. The former was by far the most powerful of the three popes, who, at that time, struggled for the chair of St. Peter; but his character was infamous in the extreme: and Sigismund, while he pretended to acknowledge the authority of John, had formed a secret resolution to oblige him to renounce the pontificate. This same Sigismund was remarkable for hypocrisy and dissimulation: political artifices, however, were multiplied by both these potentates, and by many others connected with the council. But what has the church of Christ to do with the intrigues of politicians?—These were the men who undertook to punish heretics, and to reform the church.

John XXIII. secretly designed to leave the council as soon as possible; particularly if their pulse did not beat in his favour. His conscience suggested to him, that an inquiry into his own conduct would terminate in his disgrace; and the very situation of Constance, an imperial city in the circle of Suabia, exposed him too much to the power of the emperor. As he had, however, in a council at Rome, already condemned the opinions of John Huss, he was determined to confirm that judgment at Constance, and in that way to signalize his zeal for what was then called the church.

John Huss had been summoned to the council to answer for himself, though already excommunicated at Rome. He obtained, however, a safe-conduct* from the emperor, who, in conjunction with his brother Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, had committed him to the care of several Bohemian lords, particularly of John de Chlum. These travelled with him to Constance, where they arrived six days after the pope.

John Huss was born in Bohemia in 1373. He was of mean parentage, but was raised to eminence by his supe-

* A safe-conduct here means an engagement in writing that he should be allowed to pass and repass without molestation. The very words of it were, “*omni prorsus impedimento remoto, stare, morari et REDIRE, liberè permittatis sibi et suis.*” To permit himself, and those belonging to him, freely to be present, to remain, and to DEPART, every hinderance being removed.

rior genius and industry. All the authors of that time acknowledge that he was a man of capacity and eloquence, and highly esteemed for the probity and decency of his manners. This is the testimony of the famous *Æneas Sylvius*, afterwards pope of Rome. But the letters of Huss, written from Constance, which he specially requested might never be published, afford a still more striking attestation to his character. He was appointed rector of the university of Prague, which was then in a very flourishing state. His character was no less eminent in the church than in the academy. He was nominated preacher of Bethlehem in the year 1400; and was in the same year made confessor to Sophia of Bavaria, the wife of Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, a princess who highly esteemed John Huss, and was a personage of great merit: how far she was affected by the doctrine which he preached it is not easy to ascertain; but there is no doubt that, after his condemnation, she was obliged, by the order of the emperor Sigismund, to retire to Presburg.

In 1405, Huss preached in the chapel of Bethlehem with great celebrity. Some of Wickliff's works had been brought into Bohemia by a Bohemian gentleman, named Faulfisch, when he returned from Oxford. Hence, and probably by other modes of conveyance, the evangelical views of the English reformer were introduced into that country. It is not easy to determine the point of time when John Huss received a favourable impression of the works of Wickliff. At first he is said to have held them in detestation. The effect of prejudice, indeed, on a serious mind, against a person who had been condemned for heresy, was not easily to be overcome; and it is not impossible but that Luther's account of his own first reception of the works of Huss might resemble the celebrated Bohemian's reception of the works of Wickliff. "When I studied at Erford," says that truly great man, "I found in the library of the convent a book, entitled 'The Sermons of John Huss,' I was anxious to know the doctrines of that arch-heretic. My astonishment in the reading of them was incredible. What, thought I, could move the council to burn so great a man, so able and judicious an expositor of Scripture! But then the name of Huss was held in abomination! if I mentioned him with honour, I imagined the sky would fall, and the sun

be darkened ; I therefore shut the book with indignation. But I comforted myself with the thought, that perhaps he had written this before he fell into heresy !” Such were the juvenile reflections of that renowned reformer.

But it is not in the power of prejudice to prevent the progress of the Divine counsels, and the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Notwithstanding the opposition of prejudice, habit, and natural corruptions, Huss was gradually convinced of the power and excellency of evangelical doctrine. It was not necessary that he should see all things in the same light as other reformers ; but there are certain truths in which all, who are taught of God, in every age, do and must agree ; and certain points of experience also in religion, in which it is even impossible for them to differ. The doctrinal knowledge of the Bohemian reformer was, indeed, always very limited and defective ; but the little fundamental light which, through grace, he attained, was directed to the best practical purposes. He preached loudly against the abuses of the Romish church ; and particularly against the impostures of false miracles which then abounded. And about the same year, 1405, he also preached in a synod at Prague, in the archbishop’s presence, with amazing freedom against the vices of the clergy.

It was impossible that a man who rendered himself so obnoxious to the hierarchy should escape the aspersions of calumny : accordingly we find, that in the latter part of the year 1408, and the beginning of 1409, a clamour was raised against him on the following occasion.* Gregory XII., one of the three popes, whose schism gave rise to the council of Constance, was received by Bohemia. But when measures were proposed for calling a general council to compose the schism, Huss engaged the university to support those measures, and exhorted all Bohemia to the same purpose. The archbishop of Prague, who was attached to Gregory, opposed Huss, called him a schismatic, and forbade him to exercise the pastoral functions in his diocese. About the same time, on occasion of a dispute between the natives and the foreigners who belonged to the university, Huss having supported the former, and gained his point, the Germans, in disgust, retired from Prague. This circumstance enabled the Bohemian teacher to speak more publicly according to the

* *L’Enfant*, p. 29.

views of Wickliff. The archbishop of Prague committed the books of the latter to the flames in 1410. But the progress of his opinions was rather accelerated than retarded by this step.

The troubles of John Huss were now multiplied. He was excommunicated at Rome. He had sent his proctors thither to answer for him; but they were committed to prison,* after having remained there to no purpose a year and a half. Huss, after his excommunication, had no other remedy but to appeal to Almighty God in very solemn terms. In his appeal, which was charged on him as a crime, among many other things, he says, "Almighty God, the one only essence in three persons, is the first and last refuge of those who are oppressed. Our Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very man, being desirous to redeem, from eternal damnation, his children, elected before the foundation of the world, has given, by suffering a bloody and ignominious death, this excellent example to his disciples, to commit their cause to the judgment of God." He continued still to preach on subjects which he deemed seasonable and useful. In one sermon he treated of the uses of the commemoration of the saints, among which he reckons meditation on the misery of man subject to death for sin; and on the death which Jesus Christ suffered for our sin. In this same sermon, while he zealously opposes the abuses of the times, he discovers that he himself was not yet entirely clear of the popish notion of purgatory. "In praying devoutly for the dead," says he, "we procure relief to the saints in purgatory." It is sufficiently plain, however, that he could not lay much stress on the prayers of the living for the dead; for he also says expressly, "that there is no mention of such a practice in the Holy Scriptures; and that neither the prophets nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles, nor the saints that followed close after, taught prayer for the dead." "I verily believe," continues Huss, "this custom was introduced by the avarice of priests who do not trouble themselves to exhort the people to live well, as did the prophets, Jesus Christ, and the apostles, but take great care to exhort them to make rich offerings, in hopes of happiness and a speedy delivery from purgatory."

At length, John Huss was forbidden to preach at Prague any more. All that he could then do was to instruct his

* L'Enfant, p. 33.

countrymen by writings. Being summoned, as we have seen, to Constance, he obeyed : and before his departure offered to give an account of his faith in the presence of a provincial synod at Prague, but was not able to obtain an audience. In this and some other particulars, he appears to have acted with great frankness and sincerity ; and, though his mind strongly foreboded that which happened in the issue, his resolution to appear at the general council was constant and unmoved. By a letter,* which he wrote to a friend immediately before he left Prague, he entreats him, on the outside of it, not to open the letter till he should have had certain news of his death. And among other things, he says, “ You know, woe is me !—before my priesthood I freely and frequently played at chess, neglected my time, and often, unhappily, provoked others and myself into blamable heat of temper by that game.” About the same time he wrote a letter to his flock, in terms which showed how much their spiritual advantage lay at his heart. He exhorted them to steadfastness in the doctrine which he had taught them ; prayed for grace that he himself might persevere, and not betray the gospel by cowardice ; and he begged them also to pray, that he might either glorify God by martyrdom, or return to Prague with an unblemished conscience, and with more vigour than ever extirpate the doctrine of anti-christ. He expressed himself to be very uncertain of the event ; but spoke like one resigned to the Divine will, and joyful to die for the cause of Christ. In the course of his journey to Constance, he acted the same open part, and every where declared his readiness to be heard by all mankind. Such was the character and conduct of Huss, who, as we have seen, arrived at Constance six days after the pontiff John XXIII.

On the succeeding day he gave notice of his arrival to the pope, through his friend, John de Chlum, who, at the same time, implored for him the protection of his holiness. This pope himself was then in much fear on his own account, and it behoved him not, in his present circumstances, to exercise the fulness of papal domination. He therefore answered courteously ; declared that he would use all his power to prevent any injustice being† done to him while at Constance ; and he took off his excommunication.

* *L'Enfant*, p. 40.† *Ibid.* p. 43.

John Huss appears to have expected that he should have been allowed to preach before the council ; for he had prepared sermons for that purpose, which are inserted among his works.

In the first of these he professed his Christian creed. He declares his reliance on the word of God, which he observes is the true rule, and sufficient for salvation. He declares his veneration also for fathers and councils, so far as they are conformable to Scripture. "Faith," he adds, "is the foundation of all virtues. Every man must be a disciple either of God or of Satan. Faith is the rudiment of one of these schools, infidelity of the other. A man must believe in God alone, not in the virgin, not in the saints, not in the church, not in the pope: for none of these are God." He distinguishes faith into three kinds. 1. To receive a position, but with some doubt, he apprehends to be the faith which we give to mere men, who yet are fallible. 2. To adhere without any doubt to the sentiments of holy doctors: still this is only to treat their sentiments as opinions, not as articles of faith. 3. To believe simply and purely, is the faith due to the Scriptures. This is the faith which he apprehends involves in it all acts of obedience and love; the faith which no wicked man possesses: "The wicked man is a Christian," says he, "in NAME only, and cannot rehearse the creed without making himself a liar." "The church," he says, "is an assembly of all the predestinated; and consists, he thinks, of the triumphant church in heaven, the militant church on earth, and the sleeping church," (pitiable blindness!) "who are now suffering in purgatory." He allows the intercession of the Virgin Mary, and of other saints; and, in favour of this popish tenet, he speaks far more forcibly than might have been expected from one who had so unlimited a veneration for the holy Scriptures.

If Huss had been allowed to preach this, and his other sermon which treats of peace and unity, the injustice of his condemnation must have appeared evident to all mankind, and the council would have been covered with disgrace and ignominy. For there was something very peculiar in his case; he may justly be said to have been a martyr for holy practice itself. He does not seem to have held any one doctrine which, at that day, was called heretical. The superstitious notions of the times were, in general, parts of his creed: and, as far as a judgment can

now be formed, he was not possessed of more light than was absolutely necessary to constitute the character of a genuine Christian. On this account, the wickedness of his enemies was more palpably evident. The world hated him, because he was not of the world, and because he testified of it, that its works were evil. In what then did the peculiarities of his doctrine consist? The little specimen which has been given of his creed explains this matter. He held the faith of God's elect, a divine faith necessarily productive of love and obedience, distinct in its whole kind from the mere human faith of wicked men. With them, faith has nothing in its nature that draws a man to God in confidence and affection; with them the term "vicious believer" appears not to be a solecism in language; and indeed it may generally be observed, that godly men in all ages, even those men whose evangelical knowledge, like that of Huss, is extremely imperfect, always distinguish between a dead and a living faith; and that their views of this distinction are the consequences of the work of the Holy Spirit on their own hearts. They have known, in common with the rest of mankind, what a formal assent to Christianity means; they have known also, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, what a lively faith means: the former is merely human, has a dead uniformity, or an unanimated sameness; the latter has life and power; is productive of spiritual exercises and actions; is capable of great varieties, augmentations, declensions, and intervals; and is felt to be not of man, but of God. It is the distinctive mark of a child of God, THAT HE IS IN POSSESSION OF THIS LIVELY FAITH; and this, no doubt, was the spark of Divine fire which inflamed the heart of the Bohemian martyr; and which was there preserved alive amidst the contagion of superstition, the temptations of the world, and the menaces of insolent and tyrannical domination.*

Those who look only at the surface of religion might be tempted to think, that the council in general was influenced by the Spirit of God. In all their public sessions they sang an anthem, and then they prayed kneeling.†

* I have here described what the faith of the gospel implies and produces, rather than in what it specifically consists. This has been done on former occasions, and may be done again in the course of this history, when we are reviewing the characters of those who understood evangelical truth much better than Huss did.

† *L'Enfant*, p. 50.

After having remained some time in this posture, a deacon called out to them to rise; and the president, with a loud voice, addressed himself to the Holy Ghost in a collect, which, in very solemn and explicit terms, supplicated his effectual influence, that, notwithstanding the enormity of their sins, which filled them with dread, he would deign to descend into their hearts; to direct them, to dictate their decrees, and to execute them himself; and also to preserve their minds from corrupt passions, and not suffer them, through ignorance or selfishness, to swerve from justice and truth. The ideas, and perhaps the very words, of the prayer were taken from better times, when the operations of the Holy Ghost were not only professed, but *FELT* in Christian assemblies. The formalities of true religion often remain a long time after the spirit of it has been almost extinguished. It is not easy to say how much wickedness may be united with religious formalities. The rulers and great men of the Jewish nation, in the time of Christ, were remarkable examples of the hypocrisy here alluded to; and those who are acquainted with the history of their flagitious conduct will not be surprised to hear of similar instances. Both the emperor Sigismund and his consort Barba attended the religious ceremonies of this council, and both were of infamous character.*

Sigismund in a deacon's habit read the gospel, while the pope celebrated mass!

Huss was soon deprived of his liberty in the following manner. He was accused by Paletz, professor of divinity at Prague, and by Causis, a pastor of one of the parishes of the same city. These men caused bills to be posted up against him in Constance as an excommunicated heretic. When Huss complained, the pope replied, "What can I do in the case? your own countrymen† have done it." The bishops of Augsburg and of Trent were directed to summon him to appear before John XXIII. "I had expected," said Huss, "to give an account of myself before the general council, and not before the pope and his cardinals; however, I am willing to lay down my life rather than to betray the truth." He set out, therefore, without delay, accompanied by his generous friend, John de

* Æneas Sylvius, Hist.

† Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me.—John xviii. 35.

Chlum. On his arrival at the pope's palace he was committed to prison. Chlum made loud complaints to the pope, but in vain. Eight articles were exhibited against Huss by Causis ; and the pope appointed commissioners to try him. The vexations and insults to which he was exposed were endless : and there was this peculiar injustice practised against him, that he was accused of being more inimical to the doctrines of the church of Rome than he really was. Whatever Wickliff maintained, Huss was accused of maintaining : nor were his own express declarations respected, particularly in regard to transubstantiation, a doctrine which he certainly believed, and on which he wrote his thoughts while under confinement at Constance. Such, however, was the strength of mind with which he was endowed, that, during the same period, he wrote also several tracts on subjects of practical godliness, which were sent to Prague by friends whom he had at Constance. With great clearness he vindicated himself from the charge of heresy ; but his holy life was unpardonable in the eyes of his enemies : moreover, all those whom the faithfulness of his pastoral services in Bohemia had provoked, now found an opportunity to wreak their vengeance upon him.

The generous count de Chlum, grieved and incensed at the imprisonment of Huss, wrote to Sigismund on the subject. That prince immediately sent express orders to his ambassadors, to cause him to be set at liberty, and even to break the gates of the prison in case of resistance. We naturally expect to hear, in the next place, of the prisoner's enlargement ; for, independently of this application of count de Chlum, the honour of Sigismund himself, who had positively promised a safe conduct to Huss, seemed to require it. But notwithstanding all this, the Bohemian teacher was not released ! The crooked arts and intrigues both of the pope and of the emperor, were too powerful for the sincerity and open dealings of Huss : and, he soon found, that to commit himself to Him, that judgeth righteously, was his only expedient. In the mean time the doctors, in their preachings, exclaimed most pathetically against the prevailing evils and abuses, and exhorted the council to reform the church with vigour. Its growing corruptions and enormities were by them exposed in the strongest colours. Wickliff himself, or Huss, could scarcely have spoken in a more pointed or in a severer manner,

But these INNOVATORS, we find, were not permitted to censure, with impunity, even the most shameful practices. The explanation is, THEIR attachment to the see of Rome itself was doubted; whereas the divines just mentioned, preached by order of their superiors, and constantly took particular care in the midst of their keenest animadversions, to express an unequivocal respect to the popedom in general.

In the beginning of the year 1415, the commissioners for examining Huss found themselves impeded by the emperor's grant of a safe-conduct; and they scrupled not, at once, to entreat that prince to violate his most solemn engagement. To be brief; Sigismund was at length persuaded, that his conscience ought not to be burdened in this matter; but that he was excused from keeping faith with a man accused of heresy; and that to acquiesce in the desires of the venerable council, was the proper line of conduct for an obedient and "good son of the church."* Such was the language of the Romanists. A direct breach of faith is, however, so strong a violation of the LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART of man, that it was not easy even for the most able defender of a bad cause to vindicate actions of this kind. Laboured apologies have been published, to soften the transactions before us.† But to what purpose is it to multiply words, in order to misrepresent a plain fact, which may be told in very few lines? The authority of Sigismund extended over the empire; HE, by virtue of that authority, REQUIRED ALL HIS SUBJECTS TO SUFFER HUSS TO PASS AND REPASS SECURE; AND, FOR THE HONOUR OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, IF NEED BE, TO PROVIDE HIM WITH GOOD PASSPORTS.‡ Constance was an imperial city; from this city he was NOT ALLOWED to repass, but was detained in prison, till he was unjustly burnt by the order of the council. Was this for the honour of his imperial majesty? §

* Naclerus.

† Maimburg's Hist. of the Western Schism, Part II.—Varillas, Hist. of Wickliff, Part I.

‡ L'Enfant, p. 61.

§ The decree of the council upon this important subject was as follows: "This synod declares that all safe-conducts granted by the emperor, by kings, and other secular princes to heretics, or to persons accused of heresy, in the hope of reclaiming them, ought not to be of any prejudice to the Catholic faith or ecclesiastical jurisdiction, nor prevent these persons from being examined, judged, and PUNISHED as justice may require, if those heretics refuse to retract their errors;

The perfidious character of Sigismund indeed was well known. It appears from one of the letters of John Huss, that, before his departure, he had been told by some persons, that the emperor would betray him. But, this servant of God, in honour of his Master, ventured every thing for the cause of divine truth.

Before the death of their countryman, the Bohemian nobility, enraged at the perfidy of Sigismund, repeatedly remonstrated, by letters, against his proceedings ; but all to no purpose. At the solicitation of Paletz, Huss was confined in the Dominican convent, where he became dangerously sick, through the bad air, and other inconveniences of a noisome dungeon.

But suffering is not the PECULIAR lot of godly men : wickedness has also its hardships and its inconveniences. That same John XXIII., who had most unrighteously persecuted Huss, gradually found himself in so disagreeable a situation at Constance, partly from the accusations of his enemies, to the justice of which his own conscience could not but assent, and partly from the intrigues and manœuvres of Sigismund and the majority of the council, that he determined to depart, in secret, from the assembly. Four nations were represented at Constance, namely, the Italians, the Germans, the French, and the English. The last of these had proposed even to arrest the pope ; and, though this proposal did not take effect, there seemed a general agreement in the four nations to oblige him to resign his authority. The other two anti-popes, Benedict XIII., who was chiefly owned in Spain, and Gregory XII., who had some partisans in Italy, were also pressed to resign ; but, like John XXIII., they were determined to preserve the shadow of power as long as possible. The three popes seemed to vie with one another in equivocation, artifice, and disingenuity. However, Benedict and Gregory were not present at Constance, but

EVEN though they came to the place where they are to be judged, relying SOLELY upon the faith of that safe-conduct, and would not have gone thither without it. And he that has promised their safety shall NOT in such a case be obliged to keep his promise by any bond which he may have entered into, for he has done all that was required of him." Another decree referred to Huss by name, and declared that by his obstinate opposition to the Catholic faith " he had rendered himself unworthy of any safe-conduct and privilege, and by law of nature, divine and human laws, no promise ought to be kept with him to the prejudice of the Catholic faith." L'Enfant, p. 335.

sent thither their respective legates, during the sessions. At this moment, when the council seemed not a little embarrassed what course they should take, William Fillastre, a cardinal and a French divine, composed a memorial, which was highly acceptable both to the emperor and to the nations. He even advanced a sentiment which, at last, very much prevailed in the assembly, and was actually reduced to practice; namely, that a "general council was authorized to depose even a lawful pope."* This, as we have already observed, was the most beneficial effect of the council of Constance. The wisdom of Divine Providence weakened the strength of Antichrist by the measures of a council, which, in the main, was destitute both of piety and probity.

It is a remarkable instance of the love of power, in men who have been habituated to it, that John XXIII., even in the decline of his authority, was glad to signalize the relics of his pontificate by the canonization of Bridget, a Swedish woman, which took place in this same year 1415.

After numberless intrigues, in which the pope and the emperor seemed to strive which should exceed the other in dissimulation, the former fled from the council to Schaffhausen; whence he wrote to the emperor a letter couched in the most respectful terms. Schaffhausen, it should be observed, was a city belonging to Frederick, duke of Austria, who had promised to defend pope John.

By this step, the designs of those, who really intended to put an end to the schism, seemed to be quashed entirely. Among these was the emperor himself, in whose conduct, scandalous and hypocritical as it was in the extreme, one object is yet plainly discernible, a sincere desire of restoring the unity of the hierarchy. He assured the council, on the day after the departure of pope John, that he would defend their authority to the last drop of his blood. He observed, that there were many Antichrists in the world, who sought their own interest, not that of Jesus Christ: he inveighed against the conduct of John; he exposed his tyranny, simony, chicanery, and insincerity, and exhorted them to judge him according to his deserts. Thus, while the members of this assembly agreed in persecuting the Church of God, and still detained in prison the excellent John Huss, they were involved in extreme difficulties, and scarcely knew how to support the system of idolatry, and

* Page 109.

secular formality of religion, to which they were in general attached. The doctrine of the superiority of a council, started by Fillastre, was, however, maintained and pressed at this time in an elaborate discourse of John Gerson, chancellor of the university of Paris, who was looked upon as the soul of the assembly, and who, in fact, was one of the greatest men in that age, in erudition and knowledge. He admits the pope to be Christ's vicar on earth ; but asserts that his power is limited, and ought to be restrained by certain rules and laws for the edification of the church, to which the authority of the pope, and all other persons ought to be devoted. Gerson clearly disregarded the authority of Scripture, which knows nothing of such a vicar of Christ : common sense, however, and the experience of the necessity of some restrictions of the papal power, appear to have suggested to this great man several salutary arguments and propositions. Nor is this the only instance in which we may see, that even mere natural principles, without the aid of revelation, can proceed to a CERTAIN LENGTH in correcting the enormous abuses of a corrupt church.

While the imperial and papal parties were thus contending, the commissioners endeavoured to oblige John Huss to retract ; but in vain. Though infirm, and harassed, during his confinement in prison, with a variety of vexations, he answered to every particular inquiry and objection ; at the same time, always desiring to be heard by the council itself. The pope's officers hitherto guarded him ; but these being gone to their master, he was delivered to the bishop of Constance : and was afterwards carried to the fortress of Gottleben. In his letters to his friends, he commends the pope's officers, for their gentle treatment, and expresses his fears of worse usage in his new circumstances.

It was one of those remarkable instances of the conduct of Divine Providence, with which the history of the council of Constance abounds, that John XXIII. himself, the unrighteous persecutor of Huss, was soon after brought a prisoner to the same castle of Gottleben, and lodged in the same place with the victim of his cruelty. For Sigismund, determined to support the authority of the council, took such measures as effectually quashed the power of Frederic, duke of Austria, reduced him to surrender at discretion, and obliged him to abandon the cause of the

pope. Whence this pontiff, who at first had presided at the council, after having been driven to the necessity of fleeing from place to place, was at length confined at Gottleben, which was within half a league of Constance. Seldom has there been a case, which more remarkably showed, that, in external things, the same events often attend the righteous and the wicked. The real difference of condition between the pope and the martyr was INTERNAL, and ought to be measured by the different frame of their MINDS. The one was harassed with all the pangs of disappointed ambition, and had neither the knowledge nor the disposition to console himself with the DIVINE PROMISES; the latter "in patience possessed his spirit, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God."

John XXIII. was, at length, solemnly deposed, and was also rendered incapable of being re-elected. The same sentence was issued against Benedict XIII. and Gregory XII. The conduct of these three men, particularly of the first, had been so infamous, that all the world applauded these determinations of the council. In general, the members of this assembly were influenced by superstitious, selfish, worldly motives; but this decision is among the very few important instances in which they merit commendation.

While, contrary to every principle of justice, honour, and humanity, the Bohemian reformer was still detained in confinement, and still in vain solicited a fair hearing of his cause, there was exhibited at this council another striking example of the same spirit of persecution.

Jerom of Prague arrived at Constance. He was a master of arts; but had neither the clerical nor the monastic character. He is universally allowed to have been a man of very superior talents. He had adhered to John Huss; and very vigorously seconded all his endeavours to promote a reformation in Bohemia. He had travelled into England for the sake of his studies; and had thence brought the books of Wickliff into his own country.* When Huss was setting out from Prague, Jerom had exhorted him to maintain with steadfastness the doctrines which he had preached; and had promised that he would himself go to Constance to support him, if he should hear that he was oppressed. Huss, in one of his letters, expressly desired a friend to prevent Jerom's performance of this

* Camerar. Histor. Narr.

promise, lest he should meet with the same treatment as he himself had experienced. But Jerom had the generosity to disregard the entreaties of Huss, and came directly to Constance. Hearing, however, that Huss was not allowed a fair examination, and that some secret machination was carrying on against himself, he retired to Uberlingen, whence he wrote to the emperor, to request a safe-conduct. Sigismund refused to grant his petition. Upon which Jerom published a paper, declaring it to be his desire to answer any charges of heresy that could possibly be brought against him. And for the purpose of executing so laudable an intention, he begged, in the name of God, to have a safe-conduct granted to him. "If," says he, "I am put in prison, and violence is used against me before I am convicted, the council will manifest to the whole world their injustice by such a proceeding." The publication of this writing produced no satisfactory answer; and Jerom finding it impossible to be of any service to his friend Huss, resolved to return to his own country. After his departure from Constance, he was summoned to appear before the council; and a SAFE-CONDUCT or PASSPORT was despatched to him; which promised him, indeed, all manner of security, but it contained such a SALVO TO JUSTICE and the INTERESTS OF THE FAITH, as rendered it, in effect, a mere nullity; and as to the citation for his appearance, Jerom protested, on his first examination, that it had never reached his hands.

To omit a long detail of uninteresting particulars, this persecuted reformer was arrested at Hirsaw on his return to Bohemia, and led in chains to Constance.

He was immediately brought before a general congregation, which seems, on this occasion, to have assembled for the express purpose of insulting, ensnaring, and browbeating their virtuous prisoner. A bishop questioned him concerning his precipitate flight from Uberlingen, and his non-obedience to the citation. "Because," answered Jerom, "I was not allowed a safe-conduct; notwithstanding, however, if I had known of the citation, I would have returned instantly, though I had been actually on the confines of Bohemia." Upon this answer, there arose such a clamour in the assembly, that no one could be heard distinctly: every mouth opened, at once, against Jerom; and the impartial spectator saw rather the representation of the baiting of a wild beast, than of a wise assembly

investigating truth, and dispensing justice. When order was restored, Gerson, who had formerly known Jerom in France, and who discovered much acrimony towards BOTH the Bohemian reformers, reproached him for having formerly given much offence to the university of Paris, by introducing several erroneous propositions. With great spirit Jerom answered that it was hard to have opinions objected to him of so long a date; and that, moreover, the disputations of young students were never to be considered as strict disquisitions of truth. "As I was admitted master of arts," said he, "I used the liberty of discussion, allowed to philosophers; nor was I then charged with any error: I am still ready to maintain what I advanced at that time, if I am allowed; and also to retract if I be convicted of mistake."

This was not the only instance in which Jerom had occasion to show his promptitude in answering calumnies. He was repeatedly attacked in a similar style; for a persecuted follower of Christ is looked on, by the world, as lawful game. The governors of the universities of Cologne and of Heidelberg made heavy complaints of the heresies which the prisoner had maintained in those places respectively. "You vented several errors in our university," said a doctor from Cologne. "Be pleased to name one," answered Jerom. The accuser was instantly stopped in his career, and pleaded that his memory failed him. "You advanced most impious heresies among us," said a divine from Heidelberg: "I remember one particularly, concerning the Trinity. You declared, that it resembled water, snow, and ice." Jerom avowed, that he still persisted in his opinions, but was ready to retract with humility and with pleasure, when he should be convinced of an error. However, no opportunity was allowed either for explanation or defence: all was confusion and uproar: voices burst out from every quarter. "Away with him, away with him; to the fire, to the fire."

Jerom stood astonished at the gross indecency of this scene; and as soon as he could, in any degree, be heard, he looked round the assembly with a steady and most significant countenance, and cried aloud, "Since nothing but my blood will satisfy you, I am resigned to the will of God."

After this tumultuous examination, Jerom was delivered to the officers of the city, and immediately carried to a

dungeon. Some hours afterward, Wallenrod, archbishop of Riga, caused him to be conveyed privately to St. Paul's church, where he was bound to a post, and his hands were chained to his neck. In this posture he remained ten days, and was fed with bread and water only. His friends, all this time, knew not what was become of him; till at length one of them received notice of his pitiable situation from the keeper of the prison, and procured him better nourishment. But notwithstanding this, the various hardships he had undergone brought upon him a dangerous illness, in the course of which Jerom pressed the council to allow him a confessor. With difficulty he at length obtained his request; and, through the means of his confessor, this witness for the truth procured some small mitigation of his sufferings from bonds and other cruel treatment. But he remained in prison till his execution.

A number of important, coincident circumstances, tending to illustrate the state of religion in those times, have given vast celebrity to the council of Constance; otherwise, the reader must now be convinced, that the members who composed that immense assembly, merit the description which we have already given of their general character. Many of them were learned and able; many of them superstitious and bigoted; and most of them worldly-minded and unprincipled, and totally ignorant of evangelical truth.

As the works of the famous Wickliff had undoubtedly laid the foundation of the religious innovations in Bohemia, they now proceeded to condemn the doctrines of that obnoxious reformer. In this point they harmonized with John XXIII., whom they had deposed and now held in custody. For this same pontiff, John XXIII., had formerly, at the desire of Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury, condemned the doctrines of Wickliff.* These very doctrines, digested by his enemies into forty-five articles, which had formally been pronounced heretical at Rome, were now read in the council; and as far as appears, they were reprobated without one dissentient voice, and the author of them was pronounced a heretic.

The decrees of so violent and so iniquitous a council as that of Constance, concerning articles of faith, are of little moment. The heads of the articles, however, in the main and in substance, express the real sentiments of

* Wilkin's Concilia, p. 350.

Wickliff, which have been already considered and reviewed. His opposition to the POPISH* doctrine of transubstantiation was positive and unequivocal. In some particular points his meaning seems to have been distorted through prejudice or malice.

Wickliff is accused also of saying, that all things happen from absolute necessity. The council used the common Arminian arguments in opposition to the English reformer, whose sentiments, however, on this subject have never been shown to be materially different from what by far the greater part of good Christians have maintained in all ages.

If the council of Constance had studied to vindicate Wickliff's reasonings respecting the abuses of popery, and to cast an odium upon their own doctrines and proceedings, they could scarcely, it should seem, have effected their purpose by surer means than by using certain arguments which they thought proper to bring forward in confutation of the opinions of the man whom they considered a most dangerous innovator. Thus, on one occasion, they boldly affirm, "There is no salvation out of the church of Rome." A proposition of this magnitude, one would have thought, required all the proof and illustration that could be given to it. Whereas the learned council content themselves with gravely appealing to a decree of the Lateran council, and to a decretal of pope Calixtus, which establish the two following points: 1st, That the church of Rome is the mistress of all churches: and 2dly, That it is not lawful to depart from her decisions. "Hence," say they, "it clearly follows that the pope is the immediate vicegerent of Jesus Christ, because the church of Rome has so determined. Though this or that particular pope be corrupt, the church of Rome itself can never decay." Thus do these men give the palm of truth to the man whom they condemn as a heretic. For HE appealed to the Scriptures; THEY to the church of Rome; on a subject too in which that church is more particularly bound to adduce another sort of argument than that of her own authority.

In the same year commissioners were appointed to inquire into the disputes between the Teutonic knights and the Poles. And though nothing was decided at present

* It has been before observed, that on this article of faith Wickliff approached nearly to CON-substantiation.

in that business, it may throw some light on the state of Christendom, to give a general statement of the case. The Prussians, as we have seen, were among the last of the nations of Europe who received the forms of Christianity. Barbarous and untractable in their manners, they invaded and harassed their neighbours the Poles, who called to their assistance the Teutonic knights, the remnants of those warlike crusaders who so long had desolated the east. The knights, in consideration of the succours afforded to the Poles, received from them the grant of Prussia and of some neighbouring districts; which grant was confirmed by the Roman pontiff. In this manner Prussia, at length, was obliged to profess itself Christian. Nor do there seem to be in history any instances of national conversions more contrary to the genius of the gospel than this of the Prussians. The knights, armed with indulgences for the conversion of infidels, and with bulls for putting themselves in possession of conquered countries, gratified their military passion, and while they imagined they were doing God service, they wasted all the neighbourhood with fire and sword, and assaulted even the Poles, their benefactors. Several pitched battles were fought between them and the king of Poland, in which they were generally defeated. Their perfidy was equal to their ambition; for though truces were made, from time to time, they continually violated them, as if they had been determined, with all their might, to disgrace the holy religion for which they professed so much zeal. Ladislaus, king of Poland, had views more honourable to the Christian name. In a letter, which he wrote to a friend, he protested that he could not refrain from tears before a battle in which he foresaw the defeat of the knights, and that he entered into the engagement with much commiseration of his enemies.

The repeated violences of these fighting professors of Christianity obliged this prince, though victorious in the field, to send ambassadors to the council of Constance. The question of law for the decision of the assembly was, whether it is right for Christians to convert infidels by force of arms, and to seize their estates: the knights maintained the affirmative, the Polish ambassadors the negative: and such was the state of religion at that time, that the authority of a council was deemed necessary to decide a case which to us does not appear to involve the

smallest difficulty! When men are heated by ambition, or blinded by prejudice and self-interest, they often forget the dictates of common sense, and the first principles of morality.

In the same year, 1415, another object of controversy was started in the council, which was afterwards attended with important consequences, and produced one of the usual subjects of contention between the papists and the protestants; I mean the doctrine of the communion in both kinds.* John of Prague, bishop of Litomissel in Moravia, censured in the assembly the practice of the followers of Huss, who administered the wine to the laity. About twenty-five years before the council of Constance, Matthias, a curate of Prague, had ventured to preach publicly against the general disuse of the cup in the communion, and is said to have actually administered the sacrament to the laity in both kinds. It is not easy to say precisely at what period the general disuse took place, but we have seen that it was gradually effected in the dark ages, long after the time of Gregory the first of Rome; and that it, most probably, was generally adopted as the doctrine of transubstantiation prevailed. Matthias was obliged to retract in a synod assembled at Prague in 1389. It is, however, agreeable to the general views of this history to observe, from a Bohemian writer,† that Matthias was a pastor of great piety and probity, fervently zealous for the truth of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the gospel, an enemy to the reigning corruptions and abuses, and one who suffered greatly for his assiduity in preaching the word of God. He died in 1394. Some months after the departure of John Huss for Constance, Jacobel, a pastor of Prague, a man renowned for learning and purity of manners, revived the doctrine of Matthias. Peter of Dresden, being expelled from Saxony for maintaining the Waldensian doctrines, retired to Prague, and there instructed youth. From him Jacobel learnt that the withholding of the cup from the laity was an error.‡ Faithful to his convictions, he preached with perspicuity

* L'Enfant, p. 256.

† Procopius of Prague.

‡ It appears from Perrin's History of the Waldenses, p. 156, that this people rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation. According to them, "the eating of the spiritual bread is the eating of Christ's body figuratively. Otherwise, Christ must have been eaten perpetually. For we need to feed on him continually in a spiritual sense. To eat him, is to abide in him."

and with vehemence : he roused men's attention and excited their zeal : and by these means a flame was kindled throughout Bohemia respecting this matter. The clergy of that kingdom complained to the council of Constance ; and the bishop of Litomissel, while he impeached Jacobel, represented the circumstance of this new controversy as a consequence of the doctrine of John Huss, in order to hasten his condemnation.

That reformer had probably been inclined to the views of Jacobel before he left Prague ; but it was not till after he came to Constance that he published his approbation of the communion in both kinds. The principal author, or, to speak more properly, the principal reviver of this practical truth in the church of Christ, was Jacobel, who seems to have been a zealous, active, laborious minister of Christ. Little indeed is known of his pastoral services, because here, as in other cases, we have to lament that the accounts of vital godliness are general and short, while those of the controversies in external affairs are verbose and prolix. Let the Christian reader, however, contemplate with a lively satisfaction the providential effects of Waldensian light and knowledge in spiritual things.

The appearance of this new controversy, added to the question concerning Jerom of Prague, increased the fury of the storm against Huss ; and his enemies laboured day and night for his destruction. His health and strength were reduced by the rigour of confinement. The great men of Bohemia repeatedly insisted on justice being done to their countryman. But justice was a stranger at Constance : the emperor himself had perfidiously given up this faithful servant of God to the malice of his enemies ; and the council, as if conscious of the difficulty of condemning him openly, had recourse to the despicable means of attempting, by repeated insults and vexations, to shake his constancy, and render a public trial unnecessary. He was frequently examined in private. An air of violence and of menace was employed on those occasions, of which we may form some idea from one of the letters of Huss. " Causis," says he, " was there, holding a paper in his hand, and stirring up the bishop of Constantinople to oblige me to answer distinctly to each article it contained. Every day he is contriving some mischief or other. God, for my sins, has permitted HIM and PALETZ to rise up

against me. Causis examines all my letters and words with the air of an inquisitor; and Paletz has written down all the conversation which we had together for many years. I have this day suffered great vexation."

The approbation of a good conscience, and the comforting presence of the Spirit of God, appear to have supported this holy man in all his sufferings. He gave his adversaries no advantage over him either through warmth or timidity; he refused to give answers in private; he reserved himself to the public trial which he had always solicited; he retracted nothing of what he had openly preached, and he possessed his soul in patience and resignation.

The unrighteous views of the council being thus far baffled, he was conducted to Constance, lodged in the Franciscan monastery, and loaded with chains; in which condition he remained till the day of his condemnation.

His first hearing before the council was attended with so much confusion, through the intemperate rage of his enemies, that nothing could be concluded. In the second, in which the emperor was present for the purpose of preserving order, Huss was accused of denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. Some Englishmen, who knew what Wickliff held on that point, and who were ready to take for granted that Huss dissented in no article from their countryman, pressed him vehemently on the subject. It seems, however, that the Bohemian teacher followed the church of Rome on this point, which evidently appears from his treatise on the Body of Christ.

A tedious dispute ensued, concerning the refusal of Huss to join with those who condemned the errors of Wickliff. He explained himself with sufficient precision on this head: he declared, that he blamed the conduct of the archbishop Subinco at Prague, only because he had condemned Wickliff's books without examination, and without distinction; and he added, that most of the doctors of the university of Prague found fault with that prelate, because he produced no reasons from the Scriptures. Huss further observed to the council, that, not having been able to obtain justice from John XXIII., he had appealed from him to Jesus Christ. His seriousness in mentioning this appeal exposed him to the derision of the council. It was even doubted whether it were lawful to appeal to Jesus Christ. Huss, however, with great gravity affirmed, that it

was always lawful to appeal from an inferior to a higher court; that, in this case, the Judge was infallible, full of equity and compassion, and one who would not refuse justice to the miserable. The levity of the assembly, and the seriousness of the prisoner, were remarkably contrasted in these proceedings. The reader will of course understand John Huss in the sense in which, no doubt, he intended to be understood. In appealing to Jesus Christ, the conscientious martyr had his own mind fixed on the last judgment, and he aimed at making an impression on the court by directing their attention to that awful tribunal.

It would be tedious and uninteresting to take notice of the variety of calumnies with which he was aspersed. One instance may deserve to be mentioned.* “You one day,” said his accusers, “advised the people to take up arms against those who opposed your doctrine.” “I one day,” replied Huss, “while I was preaching on the Christian armour described in the sixth chapter to the Ephesians, exhorted my audience to take the sword of the Spirit and the helmet of salvation; but I expressly admonished them, that I meant the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and not a material sword.” Sigismund exhorted him to retract his errors, and declared, that, rather than support him in his heresy, he would with his own hands kindle the fire to burn him.

John de Chlum, however, was not to be dismayed by the power and multitude of the adversaries of Huss: he supported the insulted victim of their fury with courage and constancy. In his third hearing, John Huss answered the inquiries made of him concerning articles of supposed heresy, which were extracted from his own works. He answered severally to the questions with much clearness and candour, owning, denying, or explaining, as occasions required. He was vehemently pressed to retract his errors, to own the justice of the accusations, and to submit to the decrees of the council. But neither promises nor menaces moved him. “To abjure,” said he, “is to renounce an error that hath been held. But, as in many of those articles errors are laid to my charge which I never thought of, how can I renounce them by oath? As to those articles, which I own to be mine, I will renounce them with all my heart, if any man will teach me sounder doctrines.

* L'Enfant, vol. i. p. 330.

The conscientious integrity of John Huss, however, availed him not. The court demanded a universal retraction; and nothing short of that could procure him their favour. The tedious malignity of the third day's examination oppressed, at length, both the mind and body of Huss; and the more so, because he had passed the preceding night sleepless, through severity of pain. For some days before, he had also been afflicted with illness, and was, in other respects, in a weak state of health. At the close of the examination he was carried back to prison, whither John de Chlum followed him. "Oh, what a comfort," said he, "was it to me, to see that this nobleman did not disdain to stretch out his arm to a poor heretic in irons, whom all the world, as it were, had forsaken!" In the same letter in which he mentions this, he begs the prayers of his friend, because "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Such is the treatment which the dearest and most faithful servants of God are frequently called upon to endure from an evil world. After the departure of Huss, Sigismund, with the most unrelenting barbarity, expressed himself against him as a heretic worthy of the flames. On the next day a form of retraction was sent to this persecuted prisoner, which, though it was penned in equivocal and ambiguous terms, plainly appeared on the whole, to imply a confession of guilt. Huss, therefore, refused to sign it; and added, that he would rather be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck, than give offence to his pious neighbours by acknowledging that to be true which they knew to be false; that he had preached patience and constancy to others, and that he was willing to show an example of these graces, and hoped, by divine assistance, to be enabled to do so.

We have constantly seen, in the course of this history, that the holiness of heart and life, which real Christians have evidenced, from age to age, was always connected with the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; but it is in vain to look for men of real holiness and virtue who were inimical, or even indifferent, to the fundamentals of the gospel. If there were any one doctrine more particularly insisted on than another by sincere Christians, that doctrine was always, in its nature, of considerable importance; and by just connection it implied and involved the whole of godliness, even though that connection might not be

understood or relished in every part by all persons of true piety. Should we then be asked, what peculiar doctrine was maintained and espoused by John Huss, whose holiness and integrity were undoubtedly eminent, the answer is, it was the doctrine of the depravity of human nature and of the necessity of a divine influence. This, I doubt not, will appear sufficiently evident to the evangelical reader who will take the trouble fully to consider several of the articles which were objected to him, and also some extracts from his letters; for, notwithstanding that the frequent use of the terms PREDESTINATE, CHOSEN, ELECT, &c. in those articles and extracts, might lead an uninformed and superficial reader to conclude that Huss was merely a speculative defender of the doctrine of absolute decrees, without being an advocate for a real change of heart and personal holiness, it deserves to be remarked, first, that this reformer used the terms in question precisely in the sense in which they are used in Scripture; and secondly, that the doctrine of the total inability of man to save himself, both from the punishment and from the dominion of sin, was the great practical point he had in view. Among the expressions which he had used, and which were objected to him, we may mention the following: "The assembly of the predestinated is the holy church, which has neither spot nor wrinkle, which Jesus Christ calls his own. A reprobate is never a member of holy church." These and similar passages, produced in accusation against him, he partly admitted as his own; and partly qualified by a fair and candid explanation. On the whole, it is very evident that he gave offence by studiously distinguishing those whom God hath chosen to be his peculiar people in Christ, and who are evidently pointed out, by their real practical holiness, as different from the common bulk of nominal Christians. Even the pope and his cardinals, if not predestinated,* to him appeared to be no members of the body of Christ. "The church of Christ is," says he, from Bernard, "his own body, more evidently than the body which he delivered for us to death. The church is, as it were, the 'Barnfloor'† of the Lord, in which are the predestinate and the reprobate, the former being as wheat, and the latter as chaff." In these subjects he followed the ideas of Augustine, with whose writings he appears to have been much acquainted.

* Rom. viii. 29.

† 2 Kings, vi. 27.

Divine influence, therefore, implying and involving all the essentials of the gospel, according to the views of Augustine, and evidencing itself in particular persons by real humility, piety, and integrity, was one of the grand doctrinal points of John Huss; and this holy man, defective as he was in Christian light, and obscured with much superstition, was yet enabled to distinguish his scriptural creed from that of the mere religion of nature, both in theory and in practice; and he accordingly endured that cross of Christ from the persecutions of the wicked, which must ever be expected by those who will not allow merely nominal Christianity to be the real religion of Jesus. For it is well known that nothing more irritates those who live “according to the course of this world,”* than to be told that God has a holy, peculiar people, formed for himself to show forth his praise.

The following passages are extracted from his letters :

“ Almighty God will confirm the hearts of his faithful people, whom he hath chosen before the foundation of the world, that they may receive the eternal crown of glory.— I am greatly comforted with those words of our Saviour, ‘ Happy are ye when men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company,’ &c. O precious consolatory lesson, difficult, indeed, not to understand, but to practise in time of tribulation. Let patience have her perfect work. It is a light matter to speak of patience, but a great matter to fulfil it. Our most patient Champion himself, who knew that he should rise again the third day, and redeem from damnation all his elect, was troubled in spirit. Yet he, though sorely troubled, said to his disciples, Let not your hearts be troubled, &c. I trust steadfastly, the Lord will make me a partaker of the crown with you, and with all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Merciful Christ! draw us, weak creatures, after thee; for except thou draw us, we are not able to follow thee. Give us a courageous spirit, that it may be ready; for without thee we can do nothing. Give us an upright faith, a firm hope, and perfect charity.”†

The integrity of the Bohemian martyr was severely tried by the solicitations of several persons. But divine grace supported him, so that the very least equivocation was abominable in his eyes. Even his enemy, Paletz, inwardly

* Ephes. ii. 2.

† Fox, vol. i. p. 716.

reverencing his virtue, took pains to induce him to retract. "Put yourselves in my place," said Huss; "what would you do, if you were required to retract certain errors which you were sure you never held." "I own it is a hard case," answered Paletz, with tears in his eyes. It is not improbable that this man had never meant actually to expose his countryman to the flames: and it is extremely probable that he had never before considered the dilemma to which the spirit of persecution must reduce a person of real integrity, namely, either to perjure himself, or to be consumed in the flames. One of the doctors who visited Huss said to him, "If the council should tell you that you have but one eye, though you have really two, you would be obliged to agree with the council." "While God keeps me in my senses," replied Huss, "I would not say such a thing against my conscience on the intreaty or command of the whole world."

This holy confessor foreseeing his end to be near, redeemed* the little time that was left to him by writing letters, which were publicly read at Prague, in his chapel at Bethlehem, once the delightful scene of his ministry. One of these letters may be considered as a farewell sermon addressed to his flock. He intreats them to adhere solely to the word of God, and not to follow himself if they have observed any thing in him not agreeable to it; and he particularly begs them to pardon him where he had been guilty of any levity in discourse or behaviour. He begs them to be grateful to John de Chlum, and another nobleman, who had been faithful to him in his sufferings. He adds, that he hears no news of Jerom, except that he was a prisoner like himself, waiting for the sentence of death; and he concludes with an earnest prayer, that the gospel of Christ may be always preached to them in his dear chapel at Bethlehem. His firmness was that of a Christian, not of a stoic; founded in humility, not in pride. He experienced some attacks of the fears of death; but soon recovered his courage. "I am far," said he, "from the strength and zeal of the apostle Peter. Jesus Christ has not given me his talents: besides, I have more violent conflicts, and a greater number of shocks to sustain. I say, therefore, that, placing all my confidence in Jesus Christ, I am determined, when I hear

* Ephes. v. 16.

my sentence, to continue steadfast in the truth, even to the death, as the saints and you shall help me.”* Thus modestly does he write to a friend; and it is from his private epistolary correspondence that the most genuine features of his character may be drawn. John Huss appears, indeed, to have been one of those “of whom the world was not worthy;”† and of no mere man could it ever be said with more propriety, that the world hated him, because he testified of it that its works were evil. Undoubtedly his open rebukes of sin, both by his public preaching and writings, and by the uniform purity and innocence of his manners, had inflamed the tempers of the great men of the age, both in the hierarchy and the state; yet it was scarcely to be expected that the council of Constance should, even upon their own principles, proceed, without the least proof of heresy, to condemn to the flames the most upright of men, because he refused to acknowledge that to be true which he believed to be false; or that this same council should justify the deceit and perfidy of their imperial president. Their conduct, therefore, is to be considered as a striking proof, not only of the general depravity of human nature, but also of the general wickedness and hypocrisy of the Roman church at that time.

The council settled beforehand after what manner he was to be treated in case he should retract.‡ He was to have been degraded from the priesthood, and to be forever shut up between four walls. This was the only reward which the unfeeling tyrants had intended to bestow on him in the event of his wounding his conscience to gratify them! To lay the whole weight of blame on the popes, on account of the enormities of the Roman church, is to view that church superficially. IT WAS GENERALLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY CORRUPT: it had recently deposed three popes: it was, at present, without a pope; and yet could be guilty of crimes not less heinous than some of the worst which the popes ever committed.

The council, so Huss wrote the night before his death, exhorted him to renounce every one of the articles which had been extracted from his books; but he absolutely refused to accede to so unreasonable a requisition, except

* His brethren, the saints on earth, helping him by prayer, as St. Paul desired.—ED.

† Heb. xi. 38.

‡ L'Enfant, vol. i. p. 363.

they could, from the Scriptures, PROVE his doctrines to be erroneous, as they asserted them to be. This circumstance is mentioned here by way of anticipation, to obviate a misrepresentation which was studiously made concerning John Huss, as if he had PROMISED to retract. On the contrary, it appears that he persisted to the last in the defence of his innocence with UNSHAKEN INTEGRITY.

While the council was preparing the formalities of his condemnation, they enacted a decree to forbid the reception of the communion in both kinds; and assigned no other reason for it than their regard to the doctrine of transubstantiation; at the same time they owned, that IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH THIS SACRAMENT IN BOTH KINDS WAS RECEIVED BY THE BELIEVERS.* Thus the triumph of the Roman church seemed to be complete. She dared to own, that she CONTRADICTED primitive Christianity; and she dared to enact, that those who refused to obey HER institutions, though confessedly contrary to those of the primitive church, ought to be treated as heretics! What is this but open, undisguised opposition to the commands of Jesus Christ? And what other name but that of ANTICHRIST can so well express the corrupt and presumptuous domination of the Roman hierarchy?

But there is a voice in natural conscience which it is not in the power of Satan easily to silence. Sigismund, inwardly ashamed of his baseness and perfidy towards Huss, wished to save the life of that good man, though he saw that, according to the wicked policy of the council, this was not to be done, except the prisoner could be induced to forswear himself. Many persons, to second the views of the emperor, endeavoured to overcome the constancy of Huss: even the council sent several deputations to him for that purpose. One of this martyr's letters throws some light on these transactions.† "Paletz," says he, "attempts to persuade me that I ought to abjure, because of the great advantage which will accrue to me from it. I told him, that to be condemned and burned was not so scandalous as to be guilty of falsehood." He speaks thus of his other accuser, Causis: "That poor man has been often with the deputies before the prison. I heard him say to the guards, If it please God, we shall

* *L'Enfant*, vol. i. p. 386.

† *Ibid.* p. 397.

shortly burn this heretic, who has cost me so many florins in prosecuting him."

He wrote about the same time to a preacher of his acquaintance concerning the decree of the council lately mentioned: "They have condemned the communion of the cup, with regard to the laity, as an error, and have condemned of heresy every one who violates their decree, though they have nothing but custom to oppose to an institution of Jesus Christ."

The council now ordered the works of Huss to be burnt; on occasion of which circumstance he writes to his friends: "That he was not discouraged on this account; that Jeremiah's books met with the same treatment;* nevertheless the Jews suffered the calamities which that faithful prophet had foretold.—Consider that they have condemned their pope, their god upon earth, for his crimes, particularly for selling indulgences, bishoprics, and the like. But in this they are his accomplices. The bishop of Litomissel, who is at the council, went twice to buy the archbishopric of Prague, but others outbade him. They follow this traffic even at Constance, where one sells and another buys a benefice."

At length he received another solemn deputation, in which were two cardinals and some prelates, who tried their utmost endeavours to induce him to recant. Huss, however, persisted in his integrity, and announced his resolution in terms of great vehemence and solemnity. Having withstood one more attempt of the emperor to shake his resolution, he was thus accosted by his friend John de Chlum. "I am a person of no learning, my dear Huss, and unfit to advise so learned a person as you. If you are convinced of any error, I venture, however, to advise you to retract it; if not, to endure whatever punishments shall be inflicted on you, rather than to do violence to your conscience?" An instance this of common sense and artless honesty, which deserves to be contrasted with the subtilty and intriguing spirit of the council. Huss answered with tears, that he called God to witness how ready he was to retract sincerely and upon oath any error the moment he should be convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures that it was an error. One of the prelates observed, "For my part, I am not so presumptuous as to prefer my private opinion to that of

* Jerem. xxxvi.

the whole council." "Let the meanest member of that council," replied Huss, "convince me of a mistake, and I am perfectly disposed to obey their injunctions." Some of the bishops observed, "See how obstinate he is in his errors."

He was now presented before the council in the presence of the emperor, the princes of the empire, and of an incredible concourse of people. The bishop of Lodi preached a sermon from those words of St. Paul, "That the body of sin might be destroyed."* With the grossest ignorance or the most virulent and indecent malice he perverted the words to the purpose of the council: "Destroy heresies and errors," said he, "but chiefly that obstinate heretic," pointing to the prisoner. While they were reading the articles extracted or pretended to be extracted from his works, Huss was beginning to answer to each distinctly, but was told that he might answer to them all at the same time, and was ordered at present to be silent. He expostulated against the unreasonableness of this injunction in vain. Lifting up his hands to heaven, he begged the prelates in God's name to indulge him with the freedom of speech, that he might justify himself before the people: "after which," said he, "you may dispose of me as you shall think fit." But the prelates persisting in their refusal,† he kneeled down; and with uplifted eyes and hands, and with a loud voice, he recommended his cause to the Judge of all the earth. Being accused in the article of the sacrament, of having maintained that the material bread remains after consecration, he loudly declared that he had never believed or taught so. Nothing could be more iniquitous than this charge, which he had fully denied on his former examination. But the council was determined to burn him as a heretic, and it behoved them to exhibit at any rate, some show of proving his heretical opinions. A still more shameless accusation was introduced: it was said, "A certain doctor bears witness, that Huss gave out, that he should become the fourth person in the Trinity." "What is the name of that doctor?" replied the prisoner, protesting against the charge as a flagrant calumny, and making an orthodox confession of his faith on the subject of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the bishop, who had read the accusation, refused to mention the doctor's name. Being again upbraided with his appeal to

* Rom. vi.

† L'Enfant, p. 421.

Jesus Christ, "Behold," said he, with his hands lifted up toward heaven, "most gracious Saviour, how the council condemns as an error what thou hast prescribed and practised, when, overborne by enemies, thou committedst thy cause to God thy Father, leaving us this example, that when we are oppressed, we may have recourse to the judgment of God. Yes," continued he, turning toward the assembly, "I have maintained and do still maintain, that an appeal made to Jesus Christ is most just and right, because He can neither be corrupted by bribes, nor be deceived by false witnesses, nor be overreached by any artifice.—I came voluntarily to this council, under the public faith of the emperor here present." In pronouncing these last words, he looked earnestly at Sigismund, who blushed at the sudden and unexpected rebuke.*

Sentence was now pronounced against both John Huss and his books; and he was ordered to be degraded. The bishops clothed him with the priest's garments, and put a chalice into his hands. While they were thus employed, he said, that "the Jews put a white garment on our Lord Jesus Christ, to mock him, when Herod delivered him to Pilate;" and he made reflections of the same kind on each of the sacerdotal ornaments. When he was fully apparelled, the prelates once more exhorted him to retract; and to this exhortation he replied with his usual firmness. They then caused him to come down from the stool, on which he stood, and pronounced these words, "O cursed Judas, who having forsaken the council of peace, art entered into that of the Jews, we take this chalice from thee, in which is the blood of Jesus Christ." But God was with the martyr, who cried aloud, "I trust, in the mercy of God, I shall drink of it this very day in his kingdom." Then they stripped him of all his vestments, one after another, uttering a curse on stripping him of each. Having completed his degradation by the addition of some other ridiculous insults not worthy of a distinct relation, they put a paper coronet on his head, on which they had painted three devils, with this inscription, ARCH-HERETIC, and said, "We devote thy soul to the infernal devils." "I

* We are told, that when Charles V. was solicited at the Diet of Worms to arrest Luther, notwithstanding the safe conduct which he had granted him, he replied, "I should not choose to blush with my predecessor, Sigismund."—Op. Hus. tom. ii.

am glad," said the martyr, "to wear this crown of ignominy for the love of Him who wore a crown of thorns."

When the painted paper was placed upon his head, one of the bishops said, "Now we commit thy soul to the devil." "But I," said Huss, "commit my spirit into thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ, unto thee I commend my spirit which thou hast redeemed."* The council now ordered this sentence to be pronounced, namely, "The holy synod of Constance declares, that John Huss ought to be given up to the secular power, and does accordingly so give him up, considering that the church of God has no more to do with him."

Sigismund committed the execution of Huss to the elector Palatine. The martyr, walking amidst his guards, declared his innocence to the people. When he came near the place of execution, he kneeled and prayed with such fervour, that some of the people said aloud, "What this man has done before, we know not; but we hear him now offer up most excellent prayers to God." The elector Palatine prevented him from speaking to the people, and ordered him to be burned. "Lord Jesus," said Huss, aloud, "I humbly suffer this cruel death for thy sake, and I pray thee to forgive all my enemies." His paper crown falling from off his head, the soldiers put it † on again, saying, that it must be burnt with the devils, whom he had served. His neck was fastened to the stake, and the wood was piled about him. The elector advanced to exhort him once more on the often repeated subject of retractation. "What I have written and taught,"—these were the words of Huss,—“was in order to rescue souls from the power of the devil, and to deliver them from the tyranny of sin; and I do gladly seal, what I have written and taught, with my blood.” The elector withdrawing, the fire was kindled, and Huss was soon suffocated, having called on God as long as he could speak.

Many other circumstances of the cruel indignity with which he was treated, it is not necessary to relate. It is more to our purpose to observe what Æneas Sylvius, a Roman Catholic historian, records of John Huss and of Jerom of Prague. "They went," says he, "to the stake, as to a banquet; not a word fell from them, which discovered the least timidity; they sung hymns in the flames, to the last gasp, without ceasing."

* Fox, Acts, &c. vol. i. p. 709.

† L'Enfant, p. 429.

Thus by a death which has affixed eternal infamy on the council of Constance, the celebrated John Huss, one of the most upright and blameless of men, slept in Jesus. Human depravity has not often produced a scene so completely iniquitous, and so much calculated to bring disgrace on the Roman church. The uncommon pains taken to prevent his death by a retractation, demonstrates the conviction of the council, that they were doing what they could not justify to their own consciences. At the same time, the grace of God was marvellously displayed in supporting and strengthening the martyr, who appears indeed to have exhibited all the graces of a true disciple of Christ. It has often been said, that good men would not suffer persecution, if they were not so bigoted in points of sentiment. But what shall we say of the case before us? A man of the most irreproachable character suffers the most cruel death, attended with a severe course of insult and indignity, even though he could not be proved to have held any point of doctrine absolutely distinct from the creed of his adversaries: but he was a holy man; and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

The parts and acquirements of John Huss seem to have been above mediocrity; and yet neither of them are by any means to be ranked in the highest class. A vein of good sense runs through all his writings; insomuch that Luther calls him the most rational expounder of Scripture he had ever met with. His natural temper was mild and condescending; all the traces of harshness or severity which are to be found in this reformer must be looked for in his contests with vice.—The events of his life prove him to have possessed an exquisite tenderness of conscience, together with great piety and almost unexampled fortitude. Moreover, as the piety of this champion of the faith was perfectly free from enthusiasm or mysticism, so was his fortitude unsullied with vanity or ostentation. A mind of equal energy and resolution, and more inquisitive and solicitous concerning matters of opinion,—such a mind, it may be supposed, would probably have got SOONER rid of the chains of superstition, by which the church of Rome holds its votaries in bondage. There is, however, good reason to think that he had gained so considerable an insight into the prevailing

ecclesiastical abuses, that it was not possible for him to have been held much longer in slavery by papal corruptions. But the wicked decree of the council of Constance shortened his life.

The council, with Sigismund at their head, still preserved the most solemn forms of religion, though their conduct continued to be destitute of humility, justice, and humanity. Gerson preached a sermon concerning the reformation of the church, the object of which seems to have been to transfer to the general council that despotic power which had been supposed, on divine authority, to rest with the pope. In the mean time Jerom of Prague was repeatedly examined; and he continued to sustain the rigour of his confinement with the patience and constancy manifested by the primitive martyrs.

It is remarkable that a divinity professor, named Bertrand, preached on the necessity of the reformation of the church, and strenuously exhorted the council to use the most speedy and effectual means to correct abuses; "particularly the insatiable avarice, the excessive ambition, the gross ignorance, the shameful laziness, and the execrable pride of the clergy." The council itself affected to undertake the work of reformation. They could not but be sensible that the world had a right to expect it from them: but what hopes could be indulged of success from men who, at the very same time, gloried in their iniquity; and wrote imperious letters into Bohemia, charging the clergy there to use all possible diligence to extirpate the followers of John Huss; that is, the very persons who had been most sincerely zealous in promoting that same reformation of the clergy, which the council pretended to regard as their capital object.

Something even besides solid learning and good sense was requisite for a work of this nature. Gerson excelled in both these qualities. A treatise, which he composed at this time, on the trial of spirits, abounds with excellent rules for the detection of feigned revelations and visions, and contributed to prevent the canonization of some pretended saints. But there was not in the council the unction from the Holy One,* of which St. John speaks; that is, the true faith of Christ and real Christian humility were evidently discarded in the famous assembly at Constance.

Toward the latter end of the same year, 1415, a letter

* 1 John ii. 20.

was sent to the council from Bohemia, signed by about sixty principal persons, barons, noblemen, and others of Bohemia,* an extract of which is as follows: "We know not from what motive ye have condemned John Huss, bachelor of divinity, and preacher of the gospel. Ye have put him to a cruel and ignominious death, though convicted of no heresy. We wrote in his vindication to Sigismund, king of the Romans. This apology of ours ought to have been communicated to your congregations; but we have been told that ye burnt it in contempt of us. We protest, therefore, with the heart as well as with the lips, that John Huss was a man very honest, just, and orthodox; that for many years, he conversed among us with godly and blameless manners; that during all those years he explained to us and to our subjects the gospel and the books of the Old and New Testament, according to the exposition of holy doctors approved by the church; and that he has left writings behind him in which he constantly abhors all heresy. He taught us also to detest every thing heretical. In his discourses he constantly exhorted us to the practice of peace and charity, and his own life exhibited to us a distinguished example of these virtues. After all the inquiry which we have made, we can find no blame attached to the doctrine or to the life of the said John Huss; but, on the contrary, every thing pious, laudable, and worthy of a true pastor. Ye have not only disgraced us by his condemnation, but have also unmercifully imprisoned, and perhaps already put to death, Jerom of Prague, a man of most profound learning and copious eloquence. Him also ye have condemned unconvicted. Notwithstanding all that hath passed, we are resolved to sacrifice our lives for the defence of the gospel of Christ, and of his faithful preachers." This letter was unanimously approved in an assembly of Bohemian lords held at Prague.

John de Trocznow, chamberlain to Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, known by the name of Zisca, or the one-eyed, was one of the Bohemian noblemen who highly resented the base conduct of the council. Wenceslaus asking him one day what he was musing upon, "I was thinking," said he, "on the affront offered to our kingdom by the death of John Huss." "It is out of your power or mine to revenge it," said the king; "but if you know which

* L'Enfant, vol. i. p. 506.

way to do it, exert yourself." From that time Zisca meditated those military projects for which he was afterwards so famous in history.

The council, startled at the expostulations of the Bohemian lords, yet being still determined to maintain their own unjust authority, at length, partly by promises, and partly by threatenings, induced Jerom of Prague to retract his sentiments. To carry this point they appear to have used their utmost efforts : and it is not difficult to comprehend their motives. They were anxious to avoid the infamy which would unavoidably be connected with their execution of another great and good man. Jerom's retraction was, at first, ambiguous and equivocal ; afterwards, explicit and circumstantial. He anathematized the articles both of Wickliff and of Huss, and declared that he believed every thing which the council believed. He even added, that if in future any doctrine should escape from him contrary to his recantation, he would submit to everlasting punishment ! Thus was disgraced before all the world, and humbled in his own eyes, a man of real piety, of superior parts, and of great learning and fortitude. Reader ! this is an event memorable in the annals of human imbecility. Consider diligently the instruction it affords. The power and the mercy of God, in owning his fallen servant, and in afterwards restoring and supporting him, were magnified, in this instance, in a very striking manner.

Jerom, notwithstanding his retraction, was remanded to prison, where, however, we find he was allowed a little more liberty than before.*

The council, during these transactions, made a constant parade of reforming the church. On Sundays and holidays sermons were preached on that subject from time to time. One preacher said, " When a prelate is consecrated, they ask him if he knows the Old and New Testament. Most of them, I will venture to say, cannot affirm this with a safe conscience." This same preacher inveighed, in general, with great vehemence against the vices of the clergy, which he might do with little danger to his own person, and with as little probability of profiting his audience ; because he always took care at the same time to assert the unlimited power of the pope. Other sermons to the same purport were preached, in which the wicked-

* *L'Enfant*, vol. i. p. 513.

ness of the clergy was so keenly reprov'd, that we cannot but conclude that their manners must have been, at that time, licentious beyond measure. Dr. Abendon, of Oxford, particularly exhorted bishops and other superior clergymen to apply themselves to the study of the Scriptures rather than to the litigious and lucrative science of the canon law. He inveighed against the non-residence and the simony of the prelates. The council, by their silence, could bear to give a sanction to these exhortations, though they had just before condemned to the flames a pastor who had been singularly exempt from all these vices. There were also those who, not content with the unhappy retraction of Jerom, insisted upon his being tried a second time ; and Gerson himself, with his usual zeal against heresy, was not ashamed to use his utmost efforts in promoting this most iniquitous measure.

The council actually proceeded to examine Jerom again upon the articles formerly exhibited against him, and also upon fresh articles, collected in Bohemia by certain Carmelite friars, and now, for the first time, brought forward. The prisoner refused to be sworn, because they denied him the liberty of defence.

Then it was that this great man, whom a long series of affliction and cruel persecution, and above all, the consciousness of his late prevarication, had brought into the lowest distress, began to exhibit that strength of mind, that force of genius and eloquence, and that integrity and fortitude, which will be the admiration of all ages, and which Divine grace alone could have called forth at such a juncture. How bitterly he had repented, and mourned over his fall, and with what exercises of soul he had been disciplined in secret, the intelligent Christian may easily conceive, though we have no particular account on record. We know, indeed, that after he had acted against his conscience, he retired from the council with a very heavy heart. His chains had been taken from him, but the load was transferred from his body to his mind ; and the caresses of those about him served only to mock his sorrow. The anguish of his own reflections rendered his prison a more gloomy solitude than he had ever found it before. Jerom, however, was not an apostate ; and the God whom he served had compassion on the infirmities of his nature, and did not desert him in his humiliation. No : he made his latter end to be blessed and glorious.

“How unjust is it,” exclaimed this Christian martyr, “that ye will not hear me! Ye have confined me three hundred and forty days in several prisons, where I have been cramped with irons, almost poisoned with dirt and stench, and pinched with the want of all necessities. During this time ye always gave to my enemies a hearing, but refused to hear me so much as a single hour. I wonder not that since ye have indulged them with so long and so favourable an audience, they should have had the address to persuade you that I am a heretic, an enemy to the faith, a persecutor of the clergy, and a villain. Thus prejudiced ye have judged me unheard, and ye still refuse to hear me. Remember, however, that ye are but men; and as such ye are fallible, and may suffer others to impose on you. It is said, that all learning and all wisdom is collected in this council. The more then does it behove you to take heed that ye act not rashly, lest ye should be found to act unjustly. I know that it is the design of this council to inflict sentence of death upon me. But when all is done, I am an object of small importance, who must die sooner or later. Therefore, what I say is more for your sakes than my own. It ill becomes the wisdom of so many great men to pass an unjust decree against me, and by this to establish a precedent for consequences much more pernicious than my death can be.” The council was so far moved by his reasonings that they resolved, after he had answered to the articles, to grant him liberty of speech. All the articles were read to him, one after another: and his answers were delivered with an acuteness and dexterity which astonished the court. When he was upbraided with the grossest calumnies, he stood up, with extended hands, and in a sorrowful tone cried out, “Which way, Fathers, shall I turn? whom shall I call upon for help, or to bear witness to my innocence? Shall I make my address to you? But my persecutors have entirely alienated your minds from me, by saying that I am myself a persecutor of my judges. If ye give them credit, I have nothing to hope for.” But it being impossible to bring the affair to an issue at that time, because of the number of the accusations, the court was adjourned to another day.*

The former examination took place on May 23, 1416, and he was called again before the council, according to

* L'Enfant, p. 596.

adjournment, on the 26th of the same month. On that day the remaining articles were read to him. After he had answered all the charges, owning some, denying others, and clearing up the rest, he was told, that though he had been convicted of heresy by proofs and witnesses most unexceptionable, yet they gave him liberty to speak, so that he might defend himself or retract; only, if he persisted in his errors, he must expect judgment without mercy.

Jerom, having gained this liberty of speech, though with much difficulty and opposition, determined to avail himself of the opportunity. He began with invoking the grace of God so to govern his heart and his lips, that he might advance nothing but what should conduce to the salvation of his soul. "I am not ignorant," continued he, "that many excellent men have been borne down by false witnesses, and unjustly condemned." He proved this from various instances adduced both from sacred and profane history. "Moses," said he, "was often scandalized by his brethren; Joseph was sold through envy; and afterwards imprisoned upon false reports. Isaiah, Daniel, and almost all the prophets, were unjustly persecuted. And was not John the Baptist, Jesus Christ himself, and most of his apostles, put to death as ungodly, seditious persons? In other books as well as the Bible we have similar instances. Socrates was most unjustly condemned by his countrymen; he might, indeed, have saved his life by doing violence to his conscience, but he preferred death to a disingenuous recantation. Plato, Anaxagoras, Zeno, and many others, were maltreated in various ways."—"It is a shameful thing," continued Jerom, "for one priest to be condemned unjustly by another; but the height of iniquity is, when this is done by a council, and a college of priests." He gave so probable an account of the reasons of the malice of his adversaries, that, for some moments, he seemed to have convinced his judges. "I came here of my own accord," said he, "to justify myself, which a man conscious of guilt would scarcely have done. Those who know the course of my life and studies, know that my time has been spent in exercises and works of a very different tendency from any thing wicked or heretical. As to my sentiments, the most learned men of all times have had different opinions concerning religion; they disputed about it, not to come at the truth, but to illustrate it. St. Augustine and his contemporary, St. Jerom, were not

always of the same opinion, yet were not, on that account, accused of heresy. I shall make no apology for my sentiments, because I am not conscious of maintaining any error; nor shall I retract, because it becomes not me to retract the false accusations of my enemies." He then extolled John Huss, vindicated the innocence of that holy martyr, and declared that he was ready to suffer after his example. "This pastor," said he, "by finding fault with the abuses of the clergy, and the pride of the prelates, did not act against the church of God." He declared, that he hoped one day to see his accusers, and to call them to judgment before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge of the world. He accused the council of an act of high injustice in trying him a second time on the same indictment, and declared that he should never acknowledge the authority of the new commissioners, but should look on them as judges* sitting in the chair of PESTILENCE. "I came," said he, "to Constance to defend John Huss, because I had advised him to go thither, and had promised to come to his assistance in case he should be oppressed. Nor am I ashamed here to make public confession of my own cowardice. I confess, and tremble while I think of it, that through fear of punishment by fire, I basely consented, against my conscience, to the condemnation of the doctrine of Wickliff and Huss." He then declared that he disowned his recantation as the greatest crime of which he had ever been guilty; and that he was determined, to his last breath, to adhere to the principles of those two men, which were as sound and pure, as their lives were holy and blameless. He excepted, indeed, Wickliff's opinion of the sacrament, and declared his agreement with the Roman church in the article of transubstantiation. Having concluded his speech, he was carried back to prison, and was there visited by several persons, who hoped to reclaim him, but in vain.

On May 30th, Jerom being brought again before the council, the bishop of Lodi preached a sermon from these words, "He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart."† He exhorted the prisoner not to show himself incorrigible, as he had hitherto done. He paid some tribute of praise to his extraordinary abilities, and at the same time extolled the lenity and generosity with which he had been treated by the council. The reader,

* *L'Enfant*, p. 583.† *Mark* xvi. 14.

now in possession of the facts, might smile at this gross flattery, if the subject were less grave and less affecting. Jerom, raising himself on a bench, undertook to confute the preacher. He declared again, that he had done nothing in his whole life of which he so bitterly repented, as his recantation; that he revoked it from his very soul, as also the letter which he had been induced to write on that subject to the Bohemians; that he had been guilty of the meanest falsehood by making that recantation; and that he esteemed John Huss a holy man. At the same time he declared, that he knew no heresy to which Huss was attached, unless they should call by that name his open disapprobation of the vices of the clergy; and that if, after this declaration, credit should still be given to the false witness borne against him, he should consider the fathers of the council themselves as unworthy of all belief. "This pious man," said Jerom, alluding to John Huss, "could not bear to see the revenues of the church, which were principally designed for the maintenance of the poor, and for works of liberality, spent in debauchery with women, in feasts, hounds, furniture, gaudy apparel, and other expenses, unworthy of Christianity."

The firmness, eloquence, and zeal of Jerom, sensibly affected the council. They proposed to him once more to retract. But he replied, "Ye have determined to condemn me unjustly; but after my death I shall leave a sting in your consciences, and a worm that shall never die. I appeal to the Sovereign Judge of all the earth, in whose presence ye must appear to answer me." After sentence had been pronounced against him, he was delivered to the secular power. He was treated with scorn and insult, similar to that which his friend Huss had experienced. He put the mitre with his own hands on his head,* saying that he was glad to wear it for the sake of Him who was crowned with one of thorns. As he went to execution, he sung the Apostles' Creed, and the hymns of the church, with a loud voice and a cheerful countenance. He kneeled at the stake and prayed. Being bound, he raised his voice and sang a paschal hymn much used in the church.†

* L'Enfant, vol. i. p. 591.

† Salve, festa dies, toto venerabilis ævo,
Qua Deus infernum vicit, et astra tenens.

Hail! happy day, and ever be adored,
When hell was conquered by great heaven's Lord.

The executioner approaching to the pile behind his back, lest Jerom should see him, "Come forward," said the martyr to him, "and put fire to it before my face."* He continued alive in the flames a full quarter of an hour. And there is the most unanimous testimony given by all writers, Hussite and Roman catholic, to the heroic courage and fortitude with which he sustained the torment. When he was much scorched with the fury of the fire, and almost smothered in its flame, he was heard to cry out, "O Lord God, have mercy on me! have mercy on me!" And a little afterward, "Thou knowest how I have loved thy truth." By and by the wind parted the flames, and exhibited his body full of large blisters, a dreadful spectacle to the beholders; yet even then his lips are said to have continued still moving, as if his mind was actuated by intense devotion.

Poggius, a celebrated Florentine, who had been the secretary of John XXIII., and was present at these scenes, has left the most unequivocal testimony to the abilities, fortitude, and eloquence of Jerom. I have already given the most material historical facts which he mentions.

"I confess," says this writer, "I never knew the art of speaking carried so near the model of ancient eloquence. It was amazing to hear with what force of expression, fluency of language, and excellent reasoning, he answered his adversaries; nor was I less struck with the gracefulness of his manner, the dignity of his action, and the firmness and constancy of his whole behaviour. It grieved me to think so great a man was labouring under so atrocious an accusation. Whether this accusation be just or not, God knows: I make no inquiry into the merits of the case; I submit to those who know more of it than I do."

"The assembly," continues Poggius, "was very unruly and disorderly; yet it is incredible with what acuteness the prisoner answered, and with what surprising dexterity he warded off every stroke of his adversaries. Nothing escaped him: his whole behaviour was truly great and pious.

"He took great pains to show that very little credit was due to the witnesses produced against him. He laid open the sources of their hatred to him; and in that way made a strong impression on the minds of his hearers. He lamented the cruel and unjust death of that holy man,

John Huss, and said he was armed with a full resolution to follow the steps of that blessed martyr.

"It was impossible to hear this pathetic orator without emotion. Every ear was captivated, and every heart touched. Throughout his whole oration he showed a most amazing strength of memory. He had been confined almost a year in a dungeon, the severity of which usage he complained of, but in the language of a great and good man. In this horrid place he was deprived of books and paper, yet notwithstanding this, and the constant anxiety of his mind, he was no more at a loss for proper authorities and quotations, than if he had spent the intermediate time at leisure in his study.

"His voice was sweet and full, and his action every way proper either to express indignation, or to raise pity; but he made no affected application to the passions. Firm and intrepid he stood before the council, collected in himself, and not only contemning, but seeming desirous of death. The greatest character in ancient story could not possibly have exceeded him. If there be any justice in history, this man will be admired by all posterity. I call him a prodigious man, and the epithet is not extravagant. I was an eyewitness of his whole behaviour, and could easily be more prolix on a subject so copious."*

Such is the testimony of this ingenuous papist to an adversary. His friend Aretin, to whom he wrote the letter, of which the above is an extract, was much less candid. "You attribute," says he, "to this man more than I could wish. You ought, at least, to WRITE more cautiously of these things." It has been well observed, that Poggius would probably have written more cautiously had he written a few days afterward. But his letter is dated on the very day of Jerom's execution. It came warm from the writer's heart, and proves sufficiently what HE thought of the council of Constance and their proceedings.

Notwithstanding this valuable memoir, I could wish to have been enabled to give a more edifying account of the martyrdom of Jerom: but in this point the materials of history are defective. We must ever expect that writers will record what they esteem important; and pass over what they conceive is better buried in oblivion. Unless, therefore, they have some taste for evangelical principles, and evangelical practice, they will take no notice of many

* Letter of Poggius to Aretin.

things, which to them appear bordering upon fanaticism or enthusiasm. In the instance before us, indeed, it is very probable, that Jerom himself had no very accurate or systematical acquaintance with the truth of the gospel. The knowledge, however, which he had, doubtless respected the essential doctrines of Christianity; and his spirit and constancy in suffering, his dependence on the grace of Christ, his joyful expectation of a blessed resurrection, and his humble confession of sinfulness and unworthiness, sufficiently distinguish him from the stoic philosopher, or the mere moralist, who, whatever portion he may have of the first of these qualities, is totally void of all the rest. It is remarkable, that Poggius observes, in the same letter, that “Jerom met his fate with a cheerful countenance and with MORE THAN STOICAL constancy.”

Let the reader now compare the caution and candour of Poggius the Florentine, with the infatuated bigotry of Theodoric Vrie, a monk, who flourished at the same time. His report of Jerom’s execution is, “That holding the crown that was given him, a crown of dishonour, abomination, and turpitude, he uttered these words; *The Lord Jesus Christ, my God, was crowned for my sake with a crown of thorns, and I will gladly wear this crown for his glory.* After having said this, he kneeled down for a few minutes, and then rising up, he sang the creed from the beginning to the end. Thus did the wretched man excite the compassion of all that saw him go along in that miserable condition, without taking any compassion of himself. Then being led to the stake, he was stripped of his clothes, and bound to it; and there, being all naked, in the midst of the scorching flames he sang those words; *O Lord, into thy hands I resign my spirit*; and just as he was saying, *Thou hast redeemed us*, he was suffocated by the flame and the smoke, and gave up his wretched soul. Thus did this heretical miscreant resign his miserable spirit to be burnt everlastingly in the bottomless pit.”*

Learned men of a speculative turn, and of the most impartial and dispassionate temper, have been puzzled to account for the treatment these good men met with from the council of Constance. Jerom suffered as an associate and supporter of Huss; and in regard to the latter, the sentence of the council is express, that he was a notorious, scandalous, obstinate, incorrigible heretic. L’Enfant,

* M. Von der Hardt, tom. i.

after a most careful and judicious review of all the circumstances relative to this sentence, is decidedly of opinion that the accusers failed in making out their charges, and that the council therefore were not justified in passing so severe and cruel a sentence. There is no doubt that both Huss and Jerom were victims to the rage and injustice of their unrelenting enemies. But still, in public transactions, even the most abandoned of mankind do not usually lay aside all regard to principles or to the judgment of others.

Several motives, not openly avowed by the council, have been supposed to influence their minds in the condemnation of John Huss :

1. He always refused to subscribe to the condemnation of Wickliff; and, on many occasions, he had spoken of him as a holy man. And though he did not agree with the English reformer respecting the eucharist, he appears to have been a thorough Wickliffite in all those matters which relate to the prevailing abuses of ecclesiastical power. Hence it is easy to understand how obnoxious he must have been to corrupt pontiffs and cardinals ; and, in general, to ambitious and domineering dignitaries of the established hierarchy. L'Enfant speaks out, when he says, " the **SOUNDEST** part of the council of Constance were not materially different from so many Wickliffites and Hussites." The sound part, however, it is to be feared, was but a small part of the whole ; and every one must see that by far the greater part of that assembly would concur in thinking it high time to silence a man who was continually exclaiming against the tyranny and irregularities of the clergy.

2. John Huss, by his sermons, his writings, and his conversation, had certainly contributed to render the Romish clergy in Bohemia odious and contemptible in the eyes of the people. The bishops, therefore, together with the sacerdotal and monastic orders, were sensible that their honours and advantages, their credit and authority, would be in the greatest danger, if this zealous reformer should be allowed to return into his own country, and declaim with his usual freedom. The true cause of the commotions, which existed in Bohemia, is allowed by **ALL** the authors of that time, without a single exception, to have been the scandalous conduct of the popes, the subversion of discipline, and the entire corruption of the whole ecclesiastical state.

A complete reformation, therefore, was the only adequate remedy. But this, as the event proved, was not to be expected from a corrupt hierarchy. It was far more probable that the indignant interested ecclesiastics should unite to accomplish the ruin of the man who exposed their ambition, tyranny, and avarice. For this very purpose, we are told, the wicked clergy of Bohemia and Moravia, and especially the bishops and abbots, combined together; and even contributed sums of money to be employed in procuring the condemnation and death of Huss; and all this, because they could not bear his faithful, honest advice and admonition, and because he detected their abominable pride, simony, avarice, and debauchery.*

3. That some persons of the greatest weight in the council were actually influenced by these motives is not a matter of mere conjecture. L'Enfant has given us the very words, in Latin, spoken by the emperor to the council, after the examination of Huss. The translation of them is as follows:

“ You have heard the articles laid to the charge of John Huss. They are grievous, numerous, and proved not only by credible witnesses, but by his own confession. In my opinion, there is not a single one among them which does not call for the punishment of fire. If therefore he do not retract all, I am for having him burnt. And even though he should obey the council, I am of opinion, that he should be forbid to preach, and instruct, or ever to set foot again in the kingdom of Bohemia. For if he be suffered to preach, and especially in Bohemia, where he has a strong party, he will not fail to return to his natural bent, and even to sow new errors worse than the former. Moreover, I am of opinion, that the condemnation of his errors in Bohemia ought to be sent to my brother the king of Bohemia, to Poland, and to other countries where this doctrine prevails; with orders to cause all those who shall continue to believe and teach it, to be punished by the ecclesiastical authority, and by the secular arm jointly. There is no remedy for this evil, but by thus cutting the branches as well as pulling up the root. Moreover, it is absolutely necessary that the bishops and other prelates, who have laboured here for the extirpation of this heresy, be recommended by the suffrages of the whole council to their sovereigns. Lastly,” says the emperor, “ if there are any of

* L'Enfant. Mosheim. Diar. Hussit.

John Huss's friends here at Constance, they ought to be restrained with all due severity, but especially his disciple Jerom." Whereupon, some said, that Jerom of Prague might perhaps be brought to reason by the punishment of his MASTER

This lays open the true reason of that treatment, (see p. 185,) which Huss was to have experienced in case he had retracted. The council dreaded his return to Bohemia. Even in the iniquitous sentence which they passed against him, they had the incautious effrontery to declare that John Huss was not a true preacher of the gospel of Christ, according to the exposition of holy doctors, but rather one who in his public discourses seduced the Christian people of Bohemia BY HIS COMPILATIONS from the SCRIPTURES.*

4. It is a lamentable truth, that in those days the disputes concerning the most abstract metaphysical subtilties were carried to such a height by the contending parties, as to produce the greatest bitterness and animosity. Huss was attached to the party of the REALISTS, as they were then called; and opposed with great warmth his adversaries the NOMINALISTS. This circumstance is supposed to have contributed not a little to the unhappy fate of this pious Bohemian.

It is needless to detain the reader with a minute detail of the distinctions between them. Their principal point of contention seems to have been, the existence or non-existence of abstract or universal ideas! Strange infatuation! that a difference of opinion on such abstruse and obscure subjects as these should ever have been supposed to amount to the sin against the Holy Ghost, or to a mortal offence against God, the Christian religion, justice, and the commonwealth! "Can this blindness proceed from any other cause than the influence of Satan, who diverts us from good things, and makes us apply to vain speculations, which neither inspire us with devotion towards God, nor with love and charity towards our neighbour?"—Such is the fine reflection of the anonymous author of the Examination of John de Wesalia.†

The angry disputations of these discordant sects continued till the appearance of Luther, who, by introducing

* Vid. Fascicul. rer. Sententia defin. contra Huss. p. 302.

† Fascicul. rer. exp.

more important subjects, soon put an end to the mutual wranglings of the scholastic divines.

L'Enfant mentions several medals which appear to have been struck for the purpose of commemorating the virtues of Huss. Two were preserved at Magdeburg, which have on one side the image of John Huss, with his beard and mitre, with a book in his right hand, which Luther, in a priest's habit, bare-headed and clasping the Bible with both hands, looks on with pleasure. A third was in the private cabinet of a German Count. On one side it represents Huss, with these words, *Sola Deo acceptos nos facit esse fides*—Faith alone renders us acceptable to God; and on the other side Luther, with these words, *Pestis eram, vivus; moriens ero mors tua, Papa*—I was a plague to thee, O Pope, whilst living, and will be thy death when I die.

The encomium passed by the same very impartial historian, on the private letters of Huss, is well worthy of notice: "There is not a papist nor a protestant, I will venture to say, not a Turk, nor a pagan, who, notwithstanding the hasty expressions dropped now and then in his letters, does not admire them for the dignity and piety of his sentiments, the tenderness of his conscience, his charity towards his enemies, his affection and fidelity to his friends, his gratitude to his benefactors, and above all his constancy of mind, accompanied with the most extraordinary modesty and humility."

After all, a very learned and profound ecclesiastical historian says, that there did appear in the conduct of Huss, ONE MARK OF HERESY, which, according to the maxims of that age, might expose him to condemnation with some appearance of justice; namely, HIS INFLEXIBLE OBSTINACY; which the church of Rome always considered as a grievous heresy, even in those whose errors were of little moment.* Huss refused to abjure his errors; and in so doing he resisted that council which was supposed to represent the catholic church. Moreover, he intimated with sufficient plainness that the church was fallible. All this was certainly highly criminal and intolerably heretical in the eyes of papists. For it became a dutiful son of the church to submit, without any exception, his own judgment to the judgment of his holy mother, and to believe firmly in her

* Mosh. *Historia Eccl.* p. 616. Not. (a).

infallibility. The Roman church for many years had observed the rule of Pliny :* “ In case of obstinate perseverance I ordered them to be executed. For this I had no doubt, that a sullen and obstinate inflexibility called for the vengeance of the magistrate ”

Among other valuable purposes to which the council of Constance was rendered subservient under Divine Providence, this was not of the least importance, that the wickedness of the ecclesiastical system, then prevalent in Europe, was demonstrated before all the world. All the knowledge and ability, which Europe could furnish, was collected at Constance ; yet the able and learned fathers of this council were so far from reforming the evils of what they called the church, that they proved it to be Antichrist more certainly than ever. It could no longer be said, that the particular character of such or such popes was the cause of the crimes of the clergy ; the whole of the then clerical establishment concurred in the support of iniquity.

I have already taken notice of the confession which, in the sermon preached at Constance, they themselves made, of the extreme wickedness of the outward church. Another remarkable instance of the same kind occurred on Whitsunday, the seventh of June, a very little time after the death of Jerom. A doctor preached a sermon from these words : “ They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” “ Instead of the seven gifts,” says the preacher, “ which God granted to the apostles, I fear that the devil keeps his pentecost in the hearts of most of the clergy, and that he has inspired them with the seven contrary vices.” He then gave a catalogue of those vices.

But let not malicious infidelity exult in these incontrovertible proofs of the corrupt state of the church. One of the essential doctrines of Christianity, namely, original sin, or the native depravity of man, as an apostate creature, is strongly illustrated by the general wickedness of merely nominal Christians. In the Roman Church, the real gospel itself was then neither understood, nor preached, nor valued. Hence the natural wickedness of mankind met with no resistance : even the papists could see that the whole ecclesiastical system was vicious, in its head and members, yet they trifled respecting sins with the most scandalous levity, and persecuted to death those very

* See vol. i. p. 107, of this History.

persons, who earnestly opposed the corruption of the times.

All this, however, affords no just ground of triumph to the infidel. The mere nominal Christian is, in a scriptural sense, an unbeliever as well as himself; and while neither of these characters OVERCOMES THE WORLD, because he has not true FAITH,* it is abundantly evident, and I trust it has appeared so from the course of this history, that where real Christianity is understood, and received, there sincerity, and all genuine virtues, do actually thrive and adorn the gospel.

In the year 1417, on the day of Epiphany, a sermon was preached in full council, which described the abuses of the church in so strong a manner, that if the preacher had intended to justify the reformation, attempted by Huss and Jerom, and completed a hundred years after in several parts of Europe by the protestant reformers, he could not have added much to the vehemence of his invectives. The clergy were by him taxed with pride and the love of power, with the bad distribution of benefices, the mal-administration of the sacraments, the neglect of the study of the Scriptures and of the preaching of the gospel, and the injustice of their ecclesiastical decrees. "Abomination," cried he, "appears even within these walls, nor are we without instances both of the most scandalous passions, and the basest actions." Could a preacher have been permitted with impunity to draw so frightful a picture in the face of the outward church in full council, if it had not been corrupt in the extreme; and must there not have been a radical apostasy from the real faith of Christ, where such fruits were suffered to abound?

Whether this account may be thought to bear too hard upon the character of the clergy at that time in general, and of the council in particular, let the reader judge when he has attended to a few extracts from a sermon of Bernard, a French abbot. This divine told the council, that, "with very few exceptions, they were an assembly of Pharisees, who, under the mask of processions, and other external acts of devotion, made a farce of religion and the church." "I am sorry," proceeds he, "to say it, that in our days the catholic faith is reduced to nothing; hope is turned into a rash presumption, and the love of God and our neighbour is quite extinct. Among the laity, false-

* 1 John v. 4, 5.

hood bears the chief sway; and avarice predominates among the clergy. Among the prelates there is nothing but malice, iniquity, &c. At the pope's court there is no sanctity; law-suits and quarrels being the felicity of that court, and imposture its delight." He then exhorted them to make a real reformation, to punish the guilty, and to choose a good pope. This zealous preacher saw not the root of all these evils, namely, the lamentable departure from Christian principles; and, like many other declaimers against vice, he knew no remedy but the arguments of mere moral suasion and external discipline. The power of the blood of Christ, in purging the conscience* from dead works to serve the living God, seems to have been generally unknown at that time; and, till men are brought to know something of their own native depravity, they are always too proud to submit to the righteousness of God.†

The Bohemian nobility, joined by the university of Prague, as already noticed, wrote in strong terms to the council of Constance, complaining of their having committed Huss to the flames. The council had threatened all who should favour his doctrines, and now issued a circular, commanding the adherents of the papal communion in Bohemia to assist, by every means in their power, in the extermination of all heretics.

This exposed the Hussites to new and dreadful persecutions. Their property was confiscated, and a reward offered for their apprehension. Hundreds were cast into the mines, some were drowned, and others burned. A Hussite clergyman, after many sufferings, was placed, with three farmers and four boys, on a pile of wood. Being exhorted to abjure, he replied, "God forbid! we would, if it were possible, endure death not once only, but a hundred times, rather than deny the truth of the gospel solemnly revealed in the Bible." While the fire was kindling, the clergyman, clasping the children in his arms, began a hymn of praise, in which all joined, till they were suffocated by the flames.

Nor were these cruelties confined to Bohemia. The rage of their enemies pursued the Hussites into foreign countries. Kraso, a rich merchant of Prague, when at Breslau, in Silesia, on business, in the course of conversation

* Heb. ix.

† Rom. x.

showed his attachment to the doctrines preached by Huss. He was in consequence taken up and thrown into prison. The next day a student from Prague was also imprisoned on a similar charge. Kraso, observing his companion greatly dejected through fear of the torture he might have to suffer, thus addressed him: "My brother, how great is the honour to bear a public testimony for Lord Jesus! Let us cheerfully suffer for his sake. The conflict is short—the reward eternal. Let us remember the cruel death the Lord Jesus Christ endured, when he shed his precious and innocent blood for our redemption; and let us call to mind the cloud of witnesses who have suffered martyrdom for the truth." The student, however, retracted, but the merchant remained faithful, and was led to the stake.

Not all, however, who venerated the name of Huss, and desired a reform in religion, were imbued with the meek and holy spirit of the gospel, which teaches the true followers of the Saviour to deny themselves, and patiently to suffer for his sake. Not all were endowed with the zeal and fortitude of martyrs, and ready, like their leader and others, rather to sacrifice their lives than disgrace the gospel of truth by employing carnal weapons in its defence. Many, indeed, were sufficiently enlightened to discern the falsehood and absurdity of the tenets and rites imposed on them under the name of religion, and to detect the perfidy and vices of those who claimed it as their sole prerogative to explain the Holy Scriptures, and to controul the faith of the nation; but they were still, in a great measure, ignorant of the true nature of the kingdom of Christ, which is not to be extended by the sword of the warrior or the din of arms, but by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and by the small still voice, speaking to the heart and conscience, and teaching its subjects that heavenly wisdom "which is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without hypocrisy, and without partiality."

It is desirable to anticipate a little, to give a connected view of the proceedings of the followers of Huss in consequence of these persecutions. The council of Constance was dissolved in 1418. Two years afterwards, pope Martin V. published an edict accusing the Hussites of the most damnable heresies, and calling upon emperors, kings, and princes, "for the sake of the

wounds of Jesus, and their own eternal salvation," to assist in their extirpation.

Those among the Hussites who were disposed to defend their religious liberties by force of arms, considered this as the proper moment for commencing their operations. Under their renowned leader, Zisca, they carried on war for thirteen years. Without entering into details, it is sufficient to remark, that at that time they found themselves in possession of the whole of Bohemia. Zisca died in 1424, but was succeeded by Procop, who became the leader of the Hussites. Among those who had ranged themselves under the standard of Zisca there existed much diversity of opinion. Persons of rank and learning insisted chiefly, and almost exclusively, on the restitution of the cup in the eucharist to the laity, and were called CALIXTINES. Others contended for the abolition of ALL popish errors and ceremonies. These, for the sake of greater safety, assembled for divine worship on a mountain fortified by Zisca, and called Tabor. From this circumstance they received the name of TABORITES. Their party consisted of the most upright followers of Huss, and was daily augmented by vast numbers, who flocked to them from all parts of Moravia and Bohemia. They separated from the Calixtines, and were persecuted by them.*

It was a gloomy season when the majority of those, who had the greatest sincerity in religion, made their capital object to be a † sacramental circumstance, though certainly scriptural and perfectly well founded. A gloomy season, truly ! when two men of talents and learning, and uncommonly honest and upright, lost their lives for the support of a good conscience ; and when even these, who, it is not to be doubted, died in the faith of Jesus, possessed little clearness of understanding in that faith, and were incumbered with so much rubbish of superstition, as to be incapable of giving clear and effectual instruction to their followers and admirers. And further, when the general mass of Christians, even all the dignitaries assembled at Constance, could do no more than acknowledge the necessity of reformation, while many of them

* This brief sketch of the early circumstances connected with the Reformation in Bohemia, in the present edition, is taken from the Rev. J. Holmes's History of the Protestant church of the United Brethren, being chiefly drawn from Crantz.—ED.

† Communion in both kinds.

constantly practised the foulest abominations, and were ready to burn in the flames, as heretics, any persons whose knowledge and zeal, and morals and conduct, conveyed, by a laudable contrast, a censure on their own principles and practice. The preciousness of real gospel-light, and the duty of cherishing and obeying it, when it is once understood, was never more strikingly evinced.

To return to the details respecting the council of Constance. It was not probable that the council should be able to restore peace and good order to Bohemia; for they themselves, in a great measure, had been the cause of the existing troubles. It is, however, true that they left no stone unturned in their endeavours to re-establish the corrupt custom of administering the sacrament in one kind only. By their order Gerson composed a treatise against the communion in both kinds, which was publicly read in the assembly; but which, in fact, was little calculated to compose the differences. Conscious of the difficulty of supporting his main point by the authority of Scripture alone, he observes, that, in order to understand revelation aright, recourse should be had to human laws, decrees, and the glosses of holy doctors. He maintains, that those who presume to interpret Scripture contrary to what is taught in the Scripture, as DECLARED BY THE CHURCH, and observed by the faithful, ought to be severely punished, rather than dealt with by argument. The whole treatise was unworthy of the learning and sagacity of Gerson, and deserved no notice here, except for the purpose of showing under what strong delusions those are permitted to lie who love not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. The judicious L'Enfant, who is rarely liberal in his censures, breaks out on occasion of the last-mentioned sentiment of Gerson in the following terms. "I own I do not understand Gerson's logic on this occasion. He draws a very blunt and rash inference; especially as it was the most improper thing in the world he could say to induce the Hussites of Bohemia to come to Constance, whither they were summoned."

The five nations, for the Spaniards were now added to the French, the Germans, the English, and the Italians, proceeded to elect a pope; and the choice fell upon Otho de Colonna, who took the name of Martin V. This happened in the latter end of the year 1417. All these nations, on the day after the pope's coronation, concurred

in a resolution to demand of the new pope the reformation of the church, which he had promised to make after he should be elected. He gave them good words, but did nothing effectual. The Germans were uneasy at his delays, and so were the French; though these, by joining with the Italians and the Spaniards, had caused the deferring of the reformation till after the election of a pope. The answer which Sigismund gave to the French was severe, but just. "When I urged you that the church might be reformed before the pope was elected, you would not consent: you would have a pope before the reformation. Go to him yourselves. I have not the same power which I had while the see was vacant."* It is the office of history to do justice to all characters; on which account it behoves us to declare, that Sigismund, grossly perfidious as he had shown himself in regard to Huss, appears to have been sincerely desirous of a partial reformation in the church. He had neither the knowledge nor the zeal sufficient to lead him to any thing like an evangelical reformation; but, with many other popish princes, he wished to set bounds to the tyranny of the pope, to reduce him from the state of a despot to that of a limited monarch, to check his encroachments on the rights and property both of sovereigns and of subjects, and to bring the outward church into a state of decorum and order. Sigismund certainly intended all this: and if he failed of obtaining the blessing of God even on his laudable purposes, the Christian reader will recollect that this man persecuted the church of God, lived wickedly, and hated the real principles of the gospel of Christ. Before the election of Martin V., the emperor, with the Germans and the English, was zealous that the reformation of the church should precede the election of a new pontiff; and Robert Halam, bishop of Salisbury, had distinguished himself particularly on this point. He was the favourite of the emperor; but his death at Constance gave a fatal blow to the designs of those who were anxious to oppose the ambition of the Italians. Not only the French but even the English, strenuous as they had been for the correction of abuses while Halam lived, deserted the emperor; and he was left in a minority with his Germans. The memorial of this last nation deserves to be mentioned. They complained that "the popes had assumed to

* *L'Enfant*, vol. ii. p. 207.

themselves the judgment of all causes both ecclesiastical and civil ; that by a horrid abuse, even more scandalous than simony, they taxed and rated crimes like merchandise, selling pardons of sins for ready money, and granting indulgences altogether unusual ; that they admitted persons of licentious manners into sacred orders, and that since offices were become thus saleable, no one thought knowledge and virtue to be necessary qualifications."

It is extraordinary, that any modern writers should undertake to vindicate the papacy from the charges of protestants, when it appears repeatedly, that nothing could be said worse of it by its enemies, than what was confessed by the very members of the church of Rome. It is very true that the conduct of these members of the Romish church was in the main inconsistent with their professions and declarations. With what face could these Germans charge Huss with heresy, for saying the very same things which they themselves said ? And why should Luther be condemned as too severe against the practice of indulgences, when he only represented that grand corruption in the same light in which it had been openly represented by his ancestors in this council ? But so imperious were the Italian cardinals, that they used very threatening language, accusing both the emperor, and those who favoured his views, of heresy. They also added craft to their menaces, and by degrees drew over the German deputies themselves to their party ; and at length Sigismund, being left alone, consented that the choice of a pope should be previous to the reformation. This was all that the Italians desired ; for Martin and his cardinals contrived to elude the wishes of the nations for reform. And thus, the French, who, with Gerson as their adviser, had condemned the upright servants of God, the Germans, who, with Sigismund at their head, had supported the accusation against them, and the English, who had persecuted the followers of Wickliff, and joined in the cry against Huss and Jerom, all these very deservedly became the dupes of papal artifice ; and the nations were destined for another century to groan under one of the most intolerable of all governments. The glory of God, the truths of the gospel, and the real kingdom of Jesus Christ, being kept out of sight by all parties, none of them regarding reformation much further than it concerned their own interested views, nothing that deserved the name of reformation ensued. Among the

valuable lessons to be learnt from the history of the council of Constance, this is one ; namely, that those who really mean to serve God and his Christ, and to profit mankind in religion, whether they be pastors, or synods, must begin, if the people be in a state of ignorance, with explaining the written word of God ; they must plainly set forth the essential doctrines of salvation by Jesus Christ, and then erect the whole structure of the reformation upon those doctrines.

How void the council was of all true knowledge of the scripture-doctrines of salvation, will appear from the bull, by which the pope dissolved that assembly in 1418. An extract of it is as follows : “ Martin, bishop, servant of the servants of God, at the request of the sacred council, we dismiss it. Moreover, by the authority of Almighty God, and of the blessed apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and by our own authority, we grant to all the members of the council plenary absolution of all their sins once in their lives, so that every one of them, within two months after the notification of this privilege has come to his knowledge, may enjoy the benefit of the said absolution in form. We also grant them the same privilege in the moment of death ; and we extend it to the domestics, as well as to the masters, on condition, that from the day of the notification, both the one and the other fast every Friday, during a whole year, for the absolution granted to them while alive ; and another year for their absolution in the moment of death, unless there be some lawful impediment, in which case they shall do other works of piety. And after the second year they shall be obliged to fast on Fridays during life, or to do some other acts of piety, on pain of incurring the displeasure of Almighty God and of the blessed apostles St. Peter and St. Paul.”

I hasten to close the history of this council, because in the latter part of their proceedings there is little that falls within my plan. Martin V., by making agreements with the nations separately, found means to defeat all attempts after any thing that might deserve the name of a general and effectual reformation. But though this new pontiff seemed reluctant and dilatory in correcting abuses, he soon discovered a disposition sufficiently active in supporting his own authority.

He persecuted the Hussites most vigorously. These, it has already been said, were divided into two bodies, the

Calixtines,* who differed from the church of Rome only in the affair of the new communion in both kinds; and the Taborites, who are thought to have much resembled the Waldenses. A greater encomium, the circumstances of those times being fully considered, could scarcely be passed upon them. But it is difficult to reconcile this encomium with the accounts of their military actions. Most probably, wheat was mixed with the tares; and while one part of the people lived the life of “the faith of the Son of God,”† the other could produce few marks of zeal in the cause of religion, except of a violent kind.

Under the auspices of the council of Constance, paganism was extirpated in Samogitia by the king of Poland. Historical justice required that this fact should be mentioned:—yet, I know no evidences of real conversion among the Samogitians; but, the very introduction of Christian formalities among idolaters ought to be esteemed a considerable advantage to a nation.

If the materials of evangelical history appear by no means in quantity proportioned to the length of this chapter, the importance of the salutary lessons connected with the information it contains, may be thought a sufficient apology for the defect. A great effort was made by the united wisdom of Europe, but in vain, to effect that reformation, which God alone in his own time produced in such a manner, as to illustrate the divine declaration, salvation is “not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”‡

CHAP. III.

THE HUSSITES,

UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF THE REFORMATION.

WE have seen with what indignation the Bohemians heard of the murder of John Huss and Jerom of Prague. To this cause historians ascribe the commencement of the Hussite war, which was carried on by the Bohemians for three years under the famous Zisca, and for ten years after his death.

* From calix, the cup.

† Gal. ii. 20.

‡ Zech. iv. 6.

The historian of the Church of Christ withdraws from a scene, crowded with almost incredible victories over the emperor, and with inhuman cruelties on both sides. The main body of the discontented Bohemians were at length satisfied with the liberty of the cup in the sacrament, and with the administration of the ordinance in their own language. These points, after the effusion of a deluge of blood, were given up by the papal party in the year 1433, and a treaty of peace was made, of which they formed the basis. In other respects, the Calixtines resembled the papists, by whose artifices they were deluded, and induced even to persecute the genuine followers of Huss. These last mentioned, the true Hussites, besides the scriptural celebration of the sacrament, desired to see a real reformation of the church, and the establishment of purity of doctrine and discipline. But, after a long series of military confusion, they found themselves still a persecuted body of men; and those of them, who had been inclined to have recourse to the sword, were gradually convinced, that patient faith, and perseverance in prayer, are the proper arms of a Christian soldier. Never indeed was there a more striking instance of the inefficacy of carnal weapons in defending the Church of Christ. The Bohemians had carried on war for thirteen years, often with great success, and always with undaunted courage and fortitude; and in the end, they gained only two privileges, merely of an external nature, in the administration of the Lord's supper. With these the majority of the people remained content, and still adhered to the papal abominations; while the real Christians were exposed as much as ever to the persecutions of the church of Rome, and were not only abandoned, but also cruelly treated by their brethren.

In the mean time the council of Basil succeeded that of Constance. But the reader, who has with me examined the motives which appear to have influenced the last-mentioned council, will not perhaps be disposed to take the same pains with that of Basil, which was conducted on a similar plan of secular intrigue and ambition. Among its other objects, the reduction of Bohemia to the papal system was not forgotten; and a compact or compromise was agreed upon; but the only article actually granted by the council was, that the cup should be administered

in the Lord's supper, and divine worship celebrated in the language of the people.*

Rokyzan, a Calixtine, was allured by the hopes of the archbishopric of Prague, to second the views of the papal party; the genuine followers of Huss were, however, not without hopes of engaging him to promote a more complete reformation. His sister's son, Gregory, who was in a great measure the founder of the unity of the Hussite brethren, solicited Rokyzan in the most pressing manner to promote vital godliness. But though he had light enough to approve of the pious intentions of his nephew, and was fully convinced of the truth of the doctrines taught by Huss, the hope of being promoted to the archbishopric of Prague induced him to be satisfied with the compact, and in other respects to use his endeavours to preserve the Bohemians in union with the Church of Rome. In 1435 he was elected archbishop, but the pope refused to confirm the election unless he would give up the compact, and relinquish the use of the cup in the sacrament.

On receiving this decision, Rokyzan appeared willing to promote a general reformation in religion, being zealously urged to this by the more pious of his hearers. By

* Some further particulars may be added. Both the Hussite parties were invited to attend the council of Basil. In numbers, rank, property, and worldly distinctions, the Calixtines exceeded the Taborites, and their deputies showed more willingness to accommodate their differences with the papacy. They promised obedience to the pope upon four conditions; 1. That the word of God should be freely preached by able ministers according to the holy Scriptures, without human additions. 2. That the Lord's supper should be administered to all in both kinds, and divine worship had in the mother tongue. 3. Open sins should be punished according to the law of God, without respect of persons. 4. That the clergy should exercise no worldly dominion, but preach the gospel.

The council pretended to comply with these requests, but it only actually granted the second, and even that was afterwards annulled by the pope. Meanwhile emissaries were sent into Bohemia by the popish party, with the professed object of bringing back the people to the Romish faith, but they secretly widened the breach between the Calixtines and Taborites. In this they succeeded too well. The Calixtines were persuaded to be satisfied with the use of the cup in the sacrament, and to take up arms against their brethren; the Taborites were defeated, Procop was slain, and a few of his followers only escaped to Mount Tabor, where they were allowed to settle. It may also be observed, that the concession of this council permitting the use of the cup in the Lord's supper was directly opposed to the decree of the council of Constance.—*L'Enfant, Hist. du Concile de Basile*, lib. xviii. See Crantz. *Holmes's Hist.* p. 22.—Ed.

his exertions he prevailed on the states of the kingdom to solicit a reunion with the Greek Church, but before this could be effected the Turks took Constantinople, and thus terminated the Greek empire. The Taborites entreated Rokyzan, with increased earnestness to undertake a general reformation; but though convinced of the truth, he was of too temporizing a spirit to be willing to give up his worldly honours, and suffer reproach for the name of Christ,* yet he advised the Hussites to edify one another in private, and gave them some good books for that purpose. He also obtained for them permission to withdraw to the lordship of Lititz, on the confines of Silesia and Moravia, and there to regulate their plan of worship according to their own consciences.

About the year 1453 a number of Hussites repaired to Lititz, and chose Michael Bradazius for their minister.† He with some assistants, under the direction of Gregory, held a conference in 1457, in which the plan of the Hussite church, or that of THE UNITED BRETHREN, was formed; idolatrous rites were prohibited, and a strictness of discipline, resembling that of the primitive Christian Church, was instituted. In one point, especially, they proved themselves the genuine followers of Christ; they determined to make use of no carnal weapons for the defence of religion; and no more to suffer the name of Hussites to be disgraced by such unchristian proceedings as formerly.

They were soon called to the exercise of that passive courage which they professed. The increase of their congregations in Bohemia and Moravia, was beheld with suspicion both by Romish and Calixtine priests, and they were accused of an intention to renew the Taborite tumults, and to seize the government. The Hussites, therefore, had now no remedy. Even George Podiebrad, who was elected king of Bohemia in 1458, and who had

* See Crantz. *Holmes's Hist.* p. 24.

† In this assembly they agreed on certain fundamental principles founded on no human rules and traditions, but on the law of Christ. These principles formed the basis of their ecclesiastical constitution. They called themselves Brethren and Sisters, and assumed the general appellation of "Fratres legis Christi," that is, Brethren of the law of Christ. But as this was liable to be misunderstood, and convey the idea of a new monastic order, they exchanged it for that of FRATRES (brethren), and after many persons of similar religious views in different parts of Bohemia had joined their union, they adopted the name of UNITAS FRATRUM, that is, the Unity of the Brethren, or THE UNITED BRETHREN, and this name has been ever since retained. *Holmes's Hist.* p. 44, from Crantz. Ed.

hitherto protected them, now consented to persecute the United Brethren.

They had hoped for support in Rokyzan, whose ministry had formerly been useful to their souls. With a degree of evangelical light, this man still followed the world, and lived in miserable grandeur, dearly purchased at the expense of a good conscience. The following is an extract of a letter, which the brethren wrote to him while they laboured under the imputation of promoting needless divisions. It will give the reader some idea of their principles and spirit.* “Your sermons have been highly grateful and pleasant to us. You earnestly exhorted us to flee from the horrible errors of antichrist, revealed in these last days. You taught us, that the devil introduced the abuses of the sacraments, and that men placed a false hope of salvation in them. You confirmed to us, from the writings of the apostles, and from the examples of the primitive church, the true doctrine of those divine institutions. Being distressed in our consciences, and distracted by the variety of opinions which prevailed in the Church, we were induced to follow your advice, which was to attend the ministry of Peter Chelezitius, whose discourses and writings gave us a clearer insight into Christian truths, insomuch, that when we saw that your life and practice were at variance with your doctrine, we were constrained to entertain doubts concerning your religious character. When we conversed with you on this occasion, your answer was to this effect: ‘I know that your sentiments are true; but if I should patronise your cause, I must incur the same infamy and disgrace which you do.’ Whence we understood, that you would desert us, rather than relinquish the honours of the world. Having now no refuge but in God, we implored him to make known to us the mystery of his will. As a gracious father, he hath looked upon our afflictions, and hath heard our prayers. Trusting in our God, we have assembled ourselves in the unity of the faith by which we have been justified through Jesus Christ, and of which we were made partakers in conformity to the image of his death, that we might be the heirs of eternal life. Do not imagine that we have sepa-

* Joachim Camerarius de Ecclesiis in Bohemia et Moravia, p. 61. I have consulted this treatise, and made use of it as my guide in this chapter in connexion with Crantz’s History of the Brethren, published by La Trobe.

rated ourselves from you on account of certain rites and ceremonies instituted by men ; but on account of evil and corrupt doctrine. For if we could, in connexion with you, have preserved the true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, we never should have made this separation."

Thus does it appear that the Hussite brethren were not mere schismatics, but properly reformed Protestants, who separated from the Church of Rome on account of the essentials of godliness, and because in that church they could not preserve the genuine faith of the gospel, and purity of worship. And the constancy with which they endured persecution, showed, that they had not received the grace of God in vain. For now they were declared unworthy of the common rights of subjects : and, in the depth of winter, were driven out of the cities and villages, with the forfeiture of all their effects. The sick were thrown into the open fields, where many perished from cold and hunger. Various sorts of torture were inflicted on the brethren : numbers were barbarously murdered, and many died in the prisons.

During these melancholy scenes, Gregory, the nephew of Rokyzan, was distinguished by his zeal, fortitude, and charity. To these virtues he added prudence and discretion, of which he gave a remarkable instance.* The governor of Prague apprehending danger to the brethren to be at hand, had the kindness to warn Gregory to withdraw from Prague, which he did accordingly.† Some of the brethren were disgusted at this conduct, and boasted, that the rack was their breakfast, and the flames their dinner. Part, however, of these men failed on the trial, and recanted, to save their lives ; though of the lapsed, some be-moaned their fall, and were recovered by repentance. Gregory himself, on another occasion, endured with patience the tortures of the rack. In the extremity of his suffering he fell into a swoon, and was believed to have expired.‡ His uncle Rokyzan hastened to the prison at the news, and lamented over him in these words, " My dear Gregory, I would to God I were where thou art." So strong was the power of conscience still in this unhappy archbishop!

* It is not easy to give a regular account of these transactions according to the order of time. There is, I find, some diversity in this respect between the two authors whom I follow. But I retain the substance of the narrative collected from both.

† Joachim Camer. p. 85.

‡ Id. p. 80.

But Gregory recovered, and, being liberated by the interference of Rokyzan, was preserved by Providence to be a nursing-father to the Church to a very advanced age.

The brethren, hearing of the sensibility discovered by Rokyzan, addressed themselves to him again; but his answers were of the same kind as formerly. He was determined not to suffer persecution; and they, in their farewell letter, said to him, with Christian faithfulness, "Thou art of the world, and wilt perish with the world." The persecution now took a different turn; the Hussites were no longer tortured, but were driven out of the country; whence they were obliged to hide themselves in mountains and woods, and to live in the wilderness. In this situation, in the year 1467, they came to a resolution to form a church among themselves, and to appoint their own ministers. In 1480 they received a great increase of their numbers from the accession of Waldensian refugees who escaped out of Austria, where Stephen, the last bishop of the Waldenses in that province, was burnt alive, and where the vehemence of persecution no longer allowed this people to live in security. A union was easily formed between the Waldenses and the Hussites, on account of the similarity of their sentiments and manners. The refugees, however, found their situation but little improved by a junction with a people, who were obliged to conceal themselves in thickets and in clefts of rocks; and who, to escape detection by the smoke, made no fires, except in the night, when they read the word of God and prayed.* What they must have suffered in these circumstances may be easily conceived. The death of king Podiebrad, in 1471, had afforded them, indeed, some relief; and about the same time had died also the unhappy Rokyzan, who, in his latter days, promoted the persecutions against them, and who expired in despair.

* They sought an asylum in the mountains, the thickest forests, and the clefts and recesses of rocks, far removed from the society of other men. They kindled their fires only in the night, lest their places of retreat should be discovered by the smoke. And during the winter, when snow lay on the ground, they used the precaution, when going out, to walk one after the other, the last person dragging a bush after him to erase the marks of their feet. It may easily be conceived to what hardships the Brethren must have been exposed during this period. Yet all the privations and sufferings they endured were amply compensated to them by the rewards of a good conscience, and the divine consolations they derived from the perusal of the Scriptures, and from spiritual conversation. In these exercises they often spent whole nights.—Holmes, p. 49.

In 1481 the Hussites were banished from Moravia, but returned into that country six years afterwards. In the beginning of the sixteenth century they counted two hundred congregations in Bohemia and Moravia. Their most violent persecutors were the Calixtines, who certainly, for the most part, resembled the papists in all things, except in the particularity from which their name was derived.

And here I close, for the present, the history of the Hussites, who doubtless, as a body of men, feared God and served him in the gospel of his Son. They also maintained a degree of discipline among themselves vastly superior to that of any others of the Christian name, unless we except the churches of the Waldenses. Both of these, however, were defective in evangelical LIGHT. There wanted an exhibition of the pure doctrines of Christ, luminous, attractive, and powerful, which should publish peace and salvation to mankind through the cross of Christ, and engage the attention of the serious and thoughtful, who knew not the way of peace. God in his mercy was now hastening this exhibition by the light of the reformation, which, after we have very briefly surveyed the fifteenth century in GENERAL, must engage our attention.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that the plan of this history will require that the account of THE UNITED BRETHREN be hereafter resumed.

CHAP. IV.

A BRIEF VIEW OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

THE most remarkable events which distinguish this period in general history appear to have been directed by Divine Providence with a particular subserviency to the reformation. Only in this view they will deserve the notice of the historian of the church of Christ. In the year 1453, Constantinople was taken by the Turkish emperor, Mahomet II. From the year 1299, when the four angels were loosed, which had been bound in the river Euphrates,* that is to say, when four Turkish Sultanies were established in the east, the Turks had gradually increased their power, and filled the world with carnage and confusion. In the mean time the princes of Europe,

* Rev. ix. 14.

absorbed in the vortex of narrow and contracted politics, and under the paralyzing domination of the pope, indolently beheld these ferocious barbarians advancing further and further to the west, and formed no generous plan of defensive combination. It was in vain that the distressed emperors of the east implored the aid of the western princes. The common enemy OVERFLOWED AND PASSED OVER,—to use the prophetic language of Daniel,—and having once gained a footing in Europe, he continued to domineer over a large part of the countries where Christianity had been professed, and to desolate the nations. The same unerring spirit of prophecy which foretold these amazing scenes by St. John, foretold also the continued obduracy and impenitence of the nominal Christians. They repented not of their idolatry and practical wickedness.*

There cannot be a more melancholy contemplation than to observe the infatuation of nations, who have provoked God to forsake them. Though the voice of Providence is addressed to their senses, they consider not the works of the Lord, and at the same time seem to be as destitute of political sagacity as they are of religious principle. This fifteenth century affords an awful instance of these things. The Turks oppressed Europe with persevering cruelty; but Europe neither humbled itself before God, nor took any measures to check the ambition of the Mahometans. The Sovereign of the universe, however, was bringing order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. The learned men who emigrated from Greece revived the study of letters in Europe, and paved the way for that light of general science, which was one of the most powerful of all those subordinate means which were employed in the demolition of idolatry and superstition. By the good providence of God the noble art of printing was invented about the year 1440.† Learning was cultivated with incredible ardour: the family of the Medici was raised up to patronise science; and towards the end of this same century Erasmus arose, whose good sense, taste, and industry were made serviceable to the Reformation. By his labours, monastic superstition received a wound which has never since been healed; and learned men were furnished with critical skill and ingenuity, of which they failed not to avail themselves in the instruction of man-

* Rev. ix. 21.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 761.

kind to a degree beyond what Erasmus himself had ever conceived.

Thus, under the care of Divine Providence, materials were collected for that beautiful edifice, which began to be erected in the next century. In the fifteenth century the great value and benefit of these materials scarcely appeared; the same corruptions, both of faith and of practice, which have so often been described, still prevailed in all their horrors.

In the mean time there were some individuals who, though not connected with any particular Christian societies, evidenced the power of godliness. Among these, Thomas Rhedon, a Frenchman and a Carmelite friar, was distinguished.* This man came to Rome with the Venetian ambassadors, having undertaken this journey in the hope of improving his understanding in religious concerns. He had hitherto no conception of the enormous corruptions of that venal city, and was therefore astonished to find that even the habitation of St. Peter was become a den of thieves. His zealous spirit was stirred up in him, to give an open testimony to evangelical truth; and at length, by continual preaching, he incurred the hatred of the ruling powers. In fine, he was degraded from the priesthood, and was burnt four years after his arrival at Rome, in the year 1436, during the pontificate of Eugenius, the successor of that same Martin who was raised to the popedom by the council of Constance. Several others, who like him were enlightened, and like him were faithful to their God, though unconnected with any particular church, were executed in Germany, not long after the burning of John Huss.

Jerom Savanarola, an Italian monk, by his zeal, learning, and piety, incurred, in an eminent manner, the hatred of the court of Rome. Notwithstanding the repeated menaces of the pope, he continued to preach the word of God with great vehemence, and with a degree of light and knowledge, which seems superior to that of most, if not of all men, in that age. In 1496 he upheld the standard of the gospel at Florence, though many warned him of the danger to which he was exposed by his great boldness. At length, in the year 1498,† he and two other friars, named Dominic and Silvester, were imprisoned. During his confinement, he wrote a spiritual meditation on the

* Fox, vol. i. p. 758.

† Ibid. p. 830.

thirty-first psalm, in which he described the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, a subject peculiarly evangelical, and which needs some real exercise of practical godliness, in order to be duly understood and relished by mankind. The pope's legates arriving at Florence, Jerom and his two companions were charged with maintaining various heretical opinions, one of which deserves to be distinctly mentioned, as characteristic of the times in which they lived. For example, they were accused, in explicit terms, of having preached the doctrine of free justification through faith in Christ; and after they had persevered in what was called an obstinate heresy, they were degraded, delivered to the secular power at Florence, and burnt to death in the year 1499.

There were also some souls who, in secret, served God in the gospel of his Son; and who knew what spirituality in religion meant, though, from some particular circumstances, they were never exposed to suffer, in any considerable degree, for righteousness' sake. Among these was the famous Thomas à Kempis, who died in 1471.* Instead of entering into the tedious dispute concerning the author of the well known book of "The Imitation of Jesus Christ," let us be content with ascribing it to this monk, its reputed author. It would be impertinent in me to enter into any detail of a performance so familiar to religious readers: let it suffice to say that it abounds with pious and devotional sentiments, and could not have been written but by one well versed in Christian experience, though it partakes of the common defect of monastic writers; that is to say, it does not sufficiently illustrate the doctrine of justification by faith.

Vincent Ferrer, though bred in the midst of darkness, and connected with the worst of ecclesiastical characters, was a shining model of piety.† He was born at Valentia in Spain, became a Dominican friar, and a zealous preacher of the word of God. A quotation from his book on Spiritual Life will deserve the attention of students. "Do you desire to study to advantage? Consult God more than books, and ask him humbly to make you understand what you read. Study drains the mind and heart. Go from time to time to be refreshed at the feet of Christ under his cross. Some moments of repose there, give fresh vigour and new light: interrupt your study by short, but

* Du Pin.

† Butler, vol. iv.

fervent ejaculations. Science is the gift of the Father of lights. Do not consider it as attainable merely by the work of your own mind or industry.' This holy person was retained in the service of Peter de Luna, who, as pope, took the name of Benedict XIII., and was one of those three popes that were deposed by the council of Constance. Very few men are represented in history to have been of a more proud and deceitful character than Peter de Luna. Vincent entreated his master to resign his dignity. Benedict rather artfully eluded than directly refused the request. Bishoprics and a cardinal's hat were then offered to Vincent; but his heart was insensible to the charms of worldly honours and dignities. He very earnestly wished to become an apostolic missionary; and, in this respect, he was, at length, gratified by Benedict. At the age of forty-two he began to preach with great fervour in every town from Avignon towards Valentia. His word is said to have been powerful among the Jews, the Mahometans, and others. After he had laboured in Spain, France, and Italy, he then, at the desire of Henry IV., king of England, exerted himself in the same manner throughout the chief towns of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Still finding Peter de Luna entirely obstinate in his ambition, he renounced his service, and, by the desire of king Henry V. made Normandy and Brittany the theatre of his labours during the last two years of his life. He died at the age of sixty-two.

How truly humble this man was appears from the whole of this little account which I can collect concerning him; and particularly from his own confession; "My whole life is a sink of iniquity; I am all infection; I am corruption throughout. I feel this to be so more and more. Whoever is proud shall stand without. Christ manifests his truth to the lowly, and hides himself from the proud."

Antoninus, archbishop of Florence, born in the year 1389, seems to have been a similar character.* Great things are related of his pastoral labours and services. His secretary observing his indefatigable exertions, once said to him, "The life of a bishop is truly pitiable, if he is doomed to live in such a constant hurry as you live." "To enjoy inward peace," replied he, "we must, amidst all our affairs, ever reserve a closet, as it were, in our hearts, where we are to remain retired within ourselves, and

* Butler, vol. v.

where no worldly business can enter." He died aged seventy; and is said to have frequently repeated, in his last moments, words which he had been accustomed to use in the time of his health, namely, "To serve God is to reign."

Bernardin,* of the republic of Sienna, was born in the year 1380, and on account of his uncommon zeal in preaching, was called "The burning Coal." He gave this advice to clergymen: "Seek first the kingdom of God; and the Holy Ghost will give a wisdom which no adversary can withstand." This zealous man expressed an earnest wish to be able to cry out with a trumpet through the world, "How long will ye love simplicity?" He died aged sixty-three years.

John de Wesalia was a doctor of divinity of the fifteenth century. He taught doctrines which much displeased the Romanists. The archbishop of Mentz prosecuted him: John was imprisoned, and an assembly of popish doctors was convened to sit in judgment upon him in 1479. He made a public recantation of his doctrines; but nevertheless was condemned to a perpetual penance in a monastery of the Augustine friars, where he died soon after.

A long catalogue of charges were brought against him, from which it may be proper to select a few for the reader's perusal. He was accused for maintaining that,

1. From everlasting, God hath written a book wherein he hath inscribed all his elect; and whosoever is not already written there will never be written there at all. Moreover,

2. He that is written therein will never be blotted out.

3. The elect are saved by the grace of God alone; and what man soever God willeth to save, by enduing him with grace, if all the priests in the world were desirous to condemn and excommunicate that man, he would still be saved. Whomsoever likewise God willeth to condemn, he would still be condemned, though the presbyters, the pope, and others, were willing to save him.

4. If there had never been any pope in the world, they who are saved would have been saved. The pope, and bishops, and priests contribute nothing to salvation: concord alone, and peace among men, and a peaceable way of living, are sufficient.

5. Christ never appointed any particular fasts, nor forbade the use of flesh meat on any day.

6. If St. Peter appointed fasts, perhaps he did so for the purpose of having a better sale for his fish.*

7. The holy oil is the very same as the oil which you eat at home.

8. The Scriptures do not say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.

9. Those who undertake pilgrimages to Rome are fools.

10. I consider nothing as sinful which the Scriptures have not declared to be so.

11. I despise the pope and his councils. I love Christ; and may his word dwell in us abundantly!

12. It is a difficult thing to be a Christian.

13. Indulgences are nothing.

14. That he feared the doctors expounded holy Scripture falsely.

It was further objected to him, in the course of his examination, that he had given it as his opinion that St. Paul contributed nothing towards his conversion by his own freewill.

John de Wesalia seems to have seen clearly through several of the popish superstitions, and to have exposed them with zeal and freedom. The Christian reader cannot but wish there had been greater marks of personal contrition of soul and of true humility at the cross of Christ. However, very little is known concerning Wesalia, except from the account of his examination before the German inquisitors, who, most undoubtedly, treated him with great harshness and severity, during an examination which continued for five successive days. The writer of that account was present, and says that Wesalia was an aged man, and had long been afflicted with severe illness, but the examination was conducted with strictness. Some things alleged against him he denied having said, others he endeavoured to explain as well as his age and infirmities allowed. The writer adds, that, with the exception of the article concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit,†

* This was probably a false accusation, as well as some other articles.

† It should be remarked, that Wesalia does not appear to have spoken against the personality and the work of the Holy Spirit, and what he said respecting the procession of the Holy Ghost was only, that it did not appear to him to be pointed out in any text of the Bible.—Ed.

there was nothing deserving of the severe treatment this aged divine received, and that it chiefly arose from the mutual ill-will which existed between different orders of ecclesiastics. Two points which he maintained while under examination were, that nothing was to be believed which could not be found in the canon of Scripture; and, as expressed in the articles already mentioned, that the elect are saved only by the grace of God, so that whoever God willed to save, it was not in the power of the priesthood to condemn. These doctrines were most distasteful to the papacy, and the feeble old man was compelled to retract them, as well as the others of which he had been accused! But in the course of his trial, he had the spirit to say to the court, "If Christ were now present, and ye were to treat him as ye do me, HE might be condemned by you as a heretic."*

John Wesselus of Groningen has sometimes been taken for the same person as the preceding John de Wesalia. And no wonder; for besides the similarity of their names, they lived about the same time, and both of them opposed several of the errors and corruptions of popery.

Wesselus, however, seems to have been by far the superior character. He was one of the most learned men of the fifteenth century, and was so celebrated for his talents and attainments, as to have been denominated THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

He was born about the year 1419, not in 1400, as some have supposed. He died in 1489.

The extraordinary religious knowledge of Wesselus, and his truly Christian spirit, are indisputable. He has been justly called the Forerunner of Luther.

That great reformer was so astonished when he first met with some pieces of the composition of Wesselus, that in the Leipsic edition of 1522, he wrote a preface to the work, in which he says,† "By the wonderful providence of God, I have been compelled to become a public man, and to fight battles with those monsters of indulgences and papal decrees. All along I supposed myself to stand alone; yet have I preserved so much animation in the contest, as to be every where accused of heat and violence, and of biting too hard. However, the truth is, I have earnestly wished to have done with these followers of Baal among whom my lot is cast, and to live quietly in some

* Fascic. rer. vol. i. and Bayle, Crit. Dict.

† Ep. ii. p. 89.

corner; for I have utterly despaired of making any impression upon these brazen foreheads, and iron necks of impiety.

“ But behold, in this state of mind, I am told that even in these days there is in secret a remnant of the people of God. Nay, I am not only told so, but I rejoice to see a proof of it. Here is a new publication by Wesselus of Groningen, a man of an admirable genius, and of an uncommonly enlarged mind. It is very plain he was taught of God, as Isaiah prophesied that Christians should be: * and as in my own case, so with him, it cannot be supposed that he received his doctrines from men. If I had read his works before, my enemies might have supposed that I had learnt every thing from Wesselus, such a perfect coincidence there is in our opinions. As to myself, I do not only derive pleasure, but strength and courage from this publication. It is now impossible for me to doubt whether I am right in the points which I have inculcated, when I see so entire an agreement in sentiment, and almost the same words used by this eminent person, who lived in a different age, in a distant country, and in circumstances very unlike my own. I am surprised that this excellent Christian writer should be so little known. The reason may be, either that he lived without blood and contention, (for this is the only thing in which he differs from me,) or perhaps the Jews† of our times have suppressed his writings as heretical.

“ I recommend it therefore to the pious reader, to peruse this book with care and consideration. The writer peculiarly excels in judgment; and moreover he is admirably calculated to improve the judgment of his reader. Lastly, those who are displeased with my asperity, will meet with nothing of that sort in Wesselus, to offend them.”

A complete edition of the works of Wesselus was published in 1641, with a short account of his life, by Albert Hardenberg. The book is in quarto, and contains about nine hundred pages, and is extremely scarce.

It is only a small part of his writings, to which Luther's address to the reader is prefixed; but the subjects are very important. For example: 1. On the kind providence of God. 2. On the causes, the mysteries, and the effects of our Lord's incarnation and sufferings. 3. On

* Isaiah, liv. 13.

† The Papists.

the nature of ecclesiastical power ; and the degree of that obligation which men are under to obey the rulers of the church. 4. On the sacrament of repentance, and the keys of the church. 5. On the true communion of saints. 6. On purgatory, and on indulgences.

It is true that his writings are considerably tarnished with popish errors and superstitions ; but still the wonder is, that of these blemishes there are not many more and much greater. In general, he appears to have seen quite as far as Luther saw, as to the errors of popery, about the years 1518 and 1519. In regard to purgatory, his notion seems to have been, that it was a place of purification, but not of punishment.

I know not whether Luther ever saw the more elaborate writings of Wesselus. They are extremely practical, and very sound.

1. There are eleven chapters, taking up 184 pages, on the nature and management of prayer. Here the writer follows the order of the clauses in the Lord's prayer ; and explains them with a simplicity and copiousness of language, and an originality of thought that has rarely been exceeded in any age.

2. The second treatise, which is somewhat longer, is grave and useful throughout. The author calls it, *Rules for Meditation, or Directions for fixing the Mind in its Contemplations, and for restraining irregular thoughts.* From the case of Mary and Martha,* he takes occasion, in the first part, to make a comparison between busy and quiet scenes, between an active and a contemplative life. The rules laid down in the rest of this performance, though they savour a little of the taste of the times, in being formal and artificial, display nevertheless both great powers of intellect and an extensive erudition. Every line breathes a spirit of piety and devotion. But the depth of the writer's religious thoughts and the warmth of his spiritual affections are most evident in the *EXAMPLES*, which he subjoins, with a view to illustrate his rules for meditation : and these he takes good care to support by appropriate quotations from Scripture.

3. But the work of Wesselus, which is most solid and important, and which seems to have called forth the greatest exercises both of his head and his heart, is, *An Inquiry into the reasons of the humiliation of Christ in his incarnation and bitter pains.*—This subject is briefly

* Luke, x.

touched upon in the aforementioned small miscellaneous publication of 1522 ; but in the edition of 1614, it is again handled with uncommon ability, and to the comprehensive extent of twenty chapters on the incarnation, and eighty chapters on the greatness and the severity of our Lord's sufferings.

It is not possible to communicate a clear idea of the author's manner of treating these mysterious and fundamental points of religion, without transcribing a large part of his compositions. Suffice it to say, that he is in general perfectly scriptural, and has a clear insight into the essential doctrines of Christianity. The fall of man, repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, justification by faith only, and sanctification by the Spirit, are the revealed truths, which are constantly before his eyes. And it may seem not a little remarkable, that he should have understood perfectly how to reconcile the apparent contradictions between St. Paul and St. James in the matter of justification. "There is not," says he, "the smallest disagreement between these Apostles. They concur in one common sentiment, That the just shall live by a faith which worketh by love. Is it not by works that our natural body is proved to be alive? If there be no signs of pulse, no respiration, no warmth about the præcordia, in short, if there be no vital actions whatever, do we not pronounce the body to be dead? These actions are the proper proof that it is alive; yet they are not the CAUSE of its life. The soul, which is the source of these actions, is the cause of life; further, the more in number, vigour, and excellence these actions are, the more thoroughly we say that the body is alive. So in spiritual things. The LOVE of Christ is the noblest and most excellent of the intellectual affections; and, in this our mortal course, it is the strongest proof of life in the soul of the Christian. Moreover, love may exist even though the person sits still; does nothing; meddles not with external matters, as Martha did; but sees and tastes how sweet the Lord is, as Mary saw and tasted when she obtained the part that was not to be taken from her. But mark, there must be a PRINCIPLE of love, otherwise the actions of the lover will not be accepted. FAITH is that principle; and hence it is that faith is accepted on account of its productive nature. Now, where there is no operation of this sort, St. James pronounces the faith to be dead: and St. Paul in no wise

opposes that sentiment, when he says that a man is justified by the faith of Christ without works. However, this is not to be understood as though the faith of a true believer produced the righteousness of an angel; no: the man is justified for this reason, because it has pleased God to BESTOW on the believer a righteousness superior to that of an angel, namely, the satisfaction of Christ the great High Priest. Hence also, no religious exercise contributes more to a true justification, than frequent meditation on our Lord's passion, with a commemoration of the same. It is an exercise of faith, in which the believer's object is to become partaker of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice; and in that spirit, he confesses his sins, longs for deliverance, wishes, waits, sits at the feet of Jesus, and, like Mary, chooses the better part: such a faith, the more vigorous it is in believing, commemorating, tasting, hungering and thirsting: and the more ardent it is in producing spiritual breathings and desires, the more completely will it apply to the conscience the blood of the High Priest, and thereby justify the sinner.—And here, may we not be allowed to ask, whether the man who thus believes, desires, wishes, and prays, can properly be said to produce no works?"

But we must not dissemble that sometimes, among very fine and beautiful sentiments, the exuberant imagination of this venerable divine leads him to advance positions, which, if not absolutely contrary to Scripture, are neither warranted by it, nor capable of being proved by reason. An instance of this sort may be found, I think, in his seventh chapter, on the reasons of the incarnation of our Lord. He there maintains, that the Word, the second person of the Trinity, would have taken upon him our nature, even though man had not sinned. But it will be unnecessary to take up the reader's time with the subtile, abstruse, inconclusive arguments, which he makes use of on this and similar occasions.

There is much less objection to the manner in which he inquires (Chap. 65, on the great sufferings of our Lord,) Whether Peter, in denying Christ, so fell as to lose all spiritual life? At the same time, I pretend not to determine how far it may be either safe or laudable to indulge our curiosity in prying into questions of this nature.

It is true, says he, Peter denied him thrice; yet who can doubt, but that he nevertheless retained in his heart a

sincere love for his Master through the whole of that most trying and tempestuous season? and especially after that kind look of Jesus, which I verily believe awakened his gratitude, and produced those undeniable proofs of affection, namely, his bitter, penitential tears. I wish, continues this good man, that I had as much love for the Lord Jesus, even now, in these quiet times, as Peter had when he cursed and swore, and denied his Master. I should then certainly conclude myself to be a living member of Christ, and indeed much more alive, than I can now pretend to be. Further, in my opinion, Peter at that time had much more spiritual life than many persons in our days have, who yet are truly religious.

To some persons it may seem extraordinary, that a man, whose life was so uniformly and so eminently Christian, should have been harassed in his last illness with doubts concerning the truth of revealed religion. The friend to whom he owned the uneasiness and perplexity of his mind, was prodigiously surprised, and exhorted Wesselus to direct all his thoughts to Christ the only Saviour. This admonition did not seem to please him at the moment; and his friend retired, deeply afflicted. A short time after, the same friend returned, and Wesselus, with all the joy and satisfaction that could be expressed by one in his weak condition, cried out, “God be praised! all those vain doubtings are fled; and now all I know, is Jesus Christ and him crucified.”—He then resigned his soul to God.

Two reasons may be given, why Wesselus was not crushed in that storm of persecution which in the year 1479 broke out upon his friend and contemporary, John de Wesalia:

1. David of Burgundy, then bishop of Utrecht, is said to have loved and protected him.

2. His reputation both for learning and piety was at a great height.

Pope Sixtus IV. immediately after his inauguration at Rome, told Wesselus that he would grant him any request he should make. Wesselus answered thus: “Holy Father and kind patron, I shall not press hard upon your holiness. You well know I never aimed at great things. But as you now sustain the character of the supreme pontiff and shepherd on earth, my request is, that you would so discharge the duties of your elevated station, that your praise may correspond with your dignity, and that when the Great

Shepherd shall appear, whose first minister you are, he may say, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord : and moreover, that you may be able to say boldly, Lord, thou gavest me five talents, behold I have gained five other talents."

The pope replied, " That must be my care : but do you ask something for yourself." " Then," rejoined Wesselus, " I beg you to give me out of the Vatican library a Greek and a Hebrew Bible." " You shall have them," said Sixtus : " but, foolish man, why don't you ask for a bishopric, or something of that sort ?" " For the best of reasons," said Wesselus, because I do not want such things."*

The pious reader cannot fail to be interested in this account of a very eminent Christian, so very little known.—And here we shall conclude our review of the fifteenth century.

* *Vita Wess. ab Hardenb.*

CENTURY THE SIXTEENTH.

CHAP. I.

THE REFORMATION UNDER THE CONDUCT OF LUTHER.

PRELIMINARIES.

THE sixteenth century opened with a prospect, of all others, the most gloomy in the eyes of every true Christian. Corruption, both in doctrine and in practice, had exceeded all bounds; and the general face of Europe, though the name of Christ was every where professed, presented nothing that was properly evangelical. Great efforts, indeed, had been made to emancipate the church of Christ from the "powers of darkness;" and in consequence many individual souls had been conducted into the path of salvation. Still nothing like a general reformation had taken place in any part of Europe. The external branches, rather than the bitter root itself, which supported all the evils of false religion, being principally attacked, no prominent or extensive change had ensued. The Waldenses were too feeble to molest the popedom; and the Hussites, divided among themselves, and worn out by a long series of contentions, were almost reduced to silence. Among both were found persons of undoubted godliness, but they appeared incapable of making effectual impressions on the kingdom of antichrist. The Roman pontiffs were still the uncontrolled patrons of impiety. Neither the scandalous crimes of Alexander VI., nor the military ferocity of Julius II., (pontiffs whose actions it is foreign to the plan of this history to detail,) seem to have lessened the dominion of the court of Rome, or to have opened the eyes of men so as to induce them to make a sober investigation of the nature of true religion.

But not many years after the commencement of this

century, the world beheld an attempt to restore the light of the gospel more evangelically judicious, more simply founded on the word of God, and more ably and more successfully conducted, than any which had ever been seen since the primitive times. Martin Luther, whom Divine Providence raised up for this purpose, was evidently the instrument rather than the agent of this reformation. He was led from step to step, by a series of circumstances, far beyond his original intentions; and in a manner which might evince the excellency of the power to be of God and not of man.* Even the reformations, which took place in several other parts of Europe besides Germany, the scene of Luther's transactions, were, in a great measure, derived from the light which he was enabled to diffuse among mankind. And the peculiar excellency of the revival of godliness now before us lay in this, that it consisted in fundamentals of doctrine, rather than in the correction of mere abuses of practice; hence the history of Lutheranism recommends itself in an especial manner to the study of every theologian.

That I may be able to furnish the reader with a clear and satisfactory view of this important part of ecclesiastical history, I shall particularly avail myself of the labours of the learned Seckendorf, who published a Latin translation of Maimbourg's history,† and who, in a diffusive comment, corrected and refuted it, and at the same time supplied, from the very best materials, whatever might be wanted to illustrate the progress of Lutheranism. The authentic documents derived from the archives of the royal house of Saxe Gotha, and the original papers of Luther, Melancthon, and other reformers, are largely quoted by this author. He adverts also continually to the opposite accounts of the Romish writers. In fine, he seems to have examined all the best sources of information on this subject, and to have placed before his readers whatever might be needful to inform their judgments. I follow Seckendorf, therefore, as my principal guide, yet not exclusively; I also make use of father Paul, of Du Pin, of Sleidan, Thuanus, &c. &c. The merely modern writers, who too commonly treat these interesting matters in a superficial manner, content with elegance of style, and an indulgence

* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

† Louis Maimbourg, a learned Jesuit, wrote celebrated histories of Calvinism, Lutheranism, Arianism, &c. &c.

to the popular taste, afford little service towards the execution of my plan.

In a manuscript history, extending from the year 1524 to 1541, composed by Frederic Myconius, a very able coadjutor of Luther and Melancthon, the author describes the state of religion in the beginning of this century in striking terms. "The passion and satisfaction of Christ were treated as a bare history, like the Odyssey of Homer. Concerning faith, by which the righteousness of the Redeemer and eternal life are apprehended, there was the deepest silence. Christ was described as a severe judge, ready to condemn all who were* destitute of the intercession of saints, and of pontifical interest. In the room of Christ were substituted, as saviours and intercessors, the Virgin Mary, like a Pagan Diana, and other saints, who, from time to time, had been created by the popes. Nor were men, it seems, entitled to the benefit of their prayers, except they deserved it of them by their works. What sort of works was necessary for this end was distinctly explained; not the works prescribed in the decalogue, and enjoined on all mankind, but such as enriched the priests and monks. Those who died neglecting these, were consigned to hell, or at least to purgatory, till they were redeemed from it by a satisfaction made either by themselves or by their proxies. The frequent pronunciation of the Lord's prayer, and the salutation of the Virgin, and the recitations of the canonical hours, constantly engaged those who undertook to be religious. An incredible mass of ceremonious observances was every where visible; while gross wickedness was practised under the encouragement of indulgences, by which the guilt of the crimes was easily expiated. The preaching of the word was the least part of the episcopal function: rites and processions employed the bishops perpetually when engaged in religious exercises. The number of clergy was enormous, and their lives were most scandalous. I speak of those whom I have known in the town of Gothen," &c. If we add to this the testimony of Pellicanus, another of Luther's followers, "that a Greek Testament could not be procured at any price in all Germany,"† what can be wanting to complete the picture of that darkness in which men lived; and in what did the Christian nations differ from Pagans, except in the name? It may be proper to

* Seckendorf, vol. i. p. 4.

† Ibid. p. 132.

mention that even the university of Paris, the first of all the famous schools of learning, could not furnish a single person capable of supporting a controversy against Luther on the foundation of Scripture. And scarcely any Christian doctor, in the beginning of this century, had a critical knowledge of the word of God. The reader may find it useful to be detained a little longer in contemplating the situation of the Christian world at the time of Luther's appearance. The observations I have to offer for this purpose shall be arranged under four distinct heads; and they will, I trust, assist us in demonstrating the importance of the reformation, and evince that the difference between popery and protestantism is not merely verbal.

1. The popish doctrine of indulgences was then in the highest reputation. We shall be in no danger of misrepresenting this doctrine, if we state it according to the ideas of one of the ablest champions of popery.* The church, he tells us, imposes painful works or sufferings on offenders; which being discharged or undergone with humility, are called satisfactions; and when regarding the fervor of the penitents, or other good works, she remits some part of the task, this is called "an indulgence." For he pretends that the infinite satisfaction of Christ may be applied in two ways, either by entire remission, without the reservation of any punishment, or by the changing of a greater punishment into a less. "The first, he says, is done in baptism, the second in the case of sins committed after baptism." And here he gives us the authority of the council of Trent to support his assertion, namely, "The power to grant indulgences has been committed to the church by Jesus Christ, and the use of them is beneficial to salvation." Those, he observes, who depart this life indebted to divine justice for some of the pains reserved, must suffer them in another life in the state of purgatory.

Reliefs are, however, provided in this case also; the benefit of indulgences extends, it seems, beyond the grave, and the doctrine of commutation for offences, applied in real practice by the friends of the deceased, was held to be valid in heaven. The foundation of all this system was generally believed to be this: There was supposed to be an infinite treasure of merit in Christ and the saints, which was thought abundantly more than sufficient for themselves.

* Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, in an Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church in matters of Controversy.

Thus what is strictly true of the Divine Saviour, was asserted also of saints, namely, that their righteousness could be *imparted* to others ! This treasure was deposited in the church, under the conduct of the see of Rome, and was sold, **LITERALLY SOLD FOR MONEY**, at that see's discretion, to those who were able and willing to pay for it ; and few were found willing to undergo the course of a severe penance of unpleasant austerities, when they could afford to commute for it by pecuniary payments. The popes, and under them the bishops and the clergy, particularly the Dominican and Franciscan friars, had the disposal of this treasure ; and as the pontiffs had the power of canonizing new saints at their own will, the fund was ever growing ; and so long as the system could maintain its credit, the riches of their church, thus secularized under the appearance of religion, became a sea without a shore. No impartial examiner of authentic records will say that this account of indulgences is overcharged,—a much stronger representation might have been drawn. In fact, these were the symptoms of the last stage of papal depravity ; and as the moral evils which they encouraged were plain to every one not totally destitute of discernment, they were soon perceived, and were the first objects assaulted by the reformers.

2. But the views of those wise and holy persons were far more extensive. They saw that a practice so scandalously corrupt was connected with the grossest ignorance of the nature of gospel-grace. The doctrine of justification, in its explicit form, had been lost for many ages to the Christian world. If men had **REALLY BELIEVED** that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ salvation was obtained, and that God “justifies the ungodly” through faith alone, how could they have been imposed on by the traffic of indulgences ? In whatever manner the papist might subtilize and divide, he was compelled by his system to hold, that by a compliance with the rules of the church, either in the way of indulgences, or by some severer mode, pardon was to be obtained ; and that the satisfaction of Christ was not sufficiently meritorious for this end ; in other words, that the gift of God is **NOT** eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. (See Rom. vi. end.) And, in fact, the preachers of indulgences, whether popes themselves or their ministers, held out to the people, with sufficient clearness, that the inheritance of eternal life was

to be PURCHASED by indulgences. Proofs of this have already appeared in the course of this history, and more will be given hereafter. The testimony of Sleidan, one of the most judicious and dispassionate historians, as to the nature of indulgences, well deserves to be transcribed in this place. It is contained in the beginning of his excellent history. "Pope Leo X., making use of that power which his predecessors had usurped over all Christian churches, sent abroad into all kingdoms his letters and bulls, with ample promises of the full pardon of sins, and of eternal salvation to such as would purchase the same with money!!!" Even when the traffic of indulgences was checked by the pontiffs, as being carried on in too gross a manner, no clear account was given in what the abuse consisted. In fine, it was evident that no reformation could take place through the medium of qualifying and correcting abuses of this traffic. The system itself was wholly impious, and the right knowledge of justification was the only remedy adequate to the evil. This, therefore, the reader is to look for, as the most capital object of the reformation: and thus, in the demolition of one of the vilest perversions of superstition, there suddenly arose and revived, in all its infant simplicity, that apostolical doctrine in which is contained the great mystery of the Scriptures.

3. The state of mankind at that time was peculiarly adapted to the reception of so rich a display of gospel-grace. God sent a plentiful rain, whereby he refreshed his inheritance when it was weary. (Ps. lxxviii. 9.) Men were then bound fast in fetters of iron: their whole religion was one enormous mass of bondage. Terrors beset them on every side; and the fiction of purgatory was ever teeming with ghosts and apparitions. Persons truly serious, and such there ever were and will be, because there ever was and will be, a true church on earth, were so clouded in their understandings by the prevailing corruptions of the hierarchy, that they could find no access to God by Jesus Christ. The road of simple faith, grounded on the divine promises, connected always with real humility, and always productive of hearty and grateful obedience, was stopped up with briers and thorns. No certain rest could be afforded to the weary mind, and a state of doubt, of allowed doubt and anxiety, was recommended by the papal system. What a joyful doctrine then was that of the real gospel of remission

of sins through Christ **ALONE**, received by faith! a doctrine, which is indeed to be found every where in the Scriptures; but the Scriptures were almost unknown among the people at the beginning of the Reformation.

4. Should the philosophical sceptic, or the pharisaical formalist, express his surprise, that I should lay so great a stress on the Christian article of justification, and wonder that any person should ever be at a loss to discover the way of obtaining true peace of conscience, it may be useful towards satisfying his scruples, to remind such a character of a **FOURTH** mark of corruption, which much prevailed in the times previous to the Reformation. This is, the predominance of the Aristotelian philosophy in Europe at that period; a philosophy which knew nothing of original sin and native depravity, which allowed nothing to be criminal but certain external flagitious actions, and which was unacquainted with the idea of any righteousness of grace, imputed to a sinner. How many in this age, who neither know nor value Aristotle, do yet altogether follow his self-righteous notions of religion! These are congenial to our fallen nature, and are incapable, while they prevail in the mind, of administering any cure to papal bondage, except that which is worse than the disease itself. They tend to lead men into the depths of atheistic profaneness. But the person whom God raised up particularly at this time, to instruct an ignorant world, was most remarkably eminent for **SELF-KNOWLEDGE**. Only characters of this sort are qualified to inform mankind in subjects of the last importance towards the attainment of their eternal happiness. **LUTHER** knew himself; and he knew also the scriptural grounds on which he stood in his controversies with the ecclesiastical rulers. His zeal was disinterested, his courage undaunted. Accordingly, when he had once erected the standard of truth, he continued to uphold it with an unconquerable intrepidity, which merits the gratitude and esteem of all succeeding ages.

CHAP. II.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING INDULGENCES.

POPE ALEXANDER VI., one of the most flagitious of men, died in the year 1503. After the short interval of the

dominion of Pius III., whose pontificate lasted less than a year, Julius II. was elected as his successor. A circumstance attended this election which deserves to be recorded* as a memorable indication of those times. The cardinals agreed upon oath before the election, and obliged the new pontiff, after his election, to take the same oath, that a general council should be called within two years, to reform the church. The effect of this measure, which so strongly implied the consent of the Christian world to the necessity of a reformation, was the council of Pisa. But nothing good was to be expected from Julius, a man, in the language of worldly greatness, renowned for military ambition. By his intrigues the council of Pisa was dissolved, and Julius died in 1513, after he had filled the Christian world with blood and confusion by his violence and rapacity.

Leo X.,† a man famous for the encouragement of letters and the fine arts, and deservedly celebrated among the patrons of learned men, succeeded. But historical veracity can scarcely admit any further encomium on his character. He was a Florentine of the illustrious house of the Medici, and inherited the elegant taste and munificent spirit of that family. He was elected pope in the thirty-seventh year of his age. Though refined and humanized by his love of the liberal arts, and extremely opposed to the savage manners of Alexander and of Julius, he possessed other qualities no less inconsistent than theirs with the character of a pastor of the church of Christ. An excessive magnificence, a voluptuous indolence, and, above all, a total want of religious principle, rendered him perhaps more strikingly void of every sacerdotal qualification than any pontiffs before him. He has been accused of open infidelity; but the proofs are said to be only negative; certainly, however, he at no time took the

* Seckendorf, vol. i. p. 3.

† This prelate, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, was ordained at the age of seven years, made an abbot before he was eight years old, and at the age of thirteen became a cardinal! Such was the influence of his father in the court of Rome! Lorenzo, in a prudential letter to his son, tells him that he had heard with pleasure of his attention to communion and confession; and that there was no better way for him to obtain the favour of heaven than by habituating himself to the performance of such duties. Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de Medici*.—Lorenzo appears to have known the art of rising in this world better than the narrow road to eternal life.

least pains to discover to mankind that he had a sincere reverence for religion. It was during the pontificate of this man, that Providence gave the severest blow to the authority of the Roman hierarchy which it had ever received since the days of Gregory II.

Both before his exaltation and after it, he opposed with dexterity and success the laudable attempts for a reformation, which have been mentioned. A council called by this pope, and held in the Lateran palace, was directed under his auspices against the determinations of the council of Pisa. Afterwards, in the year 1517, the university of Paris, renowned at that time through Europe for learning and knowledge, appealed from its decisions to a future general council. It is not necessary to enter into the detail of these transactions : they are here briefly mentioned in a general way for the purpose of showing, that common sense and the voice of natural conscience had agreed to the necessity of a reformation, though men knew not the principles on which it ought to proceed. The greatest personages of the times had delivered their sentiments to the same effect. The existence of the distemper was admitted. The true remedy was unknown ; that was to be drawn only from the word of God ; and almost all parties were equally ignorant of the contents of the sacred volumes. In the same year, however, the spirit of Luther was raised up to instruct the ignorant, to rouse the negligent, and to oppose the scandalous practices of interested and ambitious ecclesiastical rulers.

No reformer had ever an opportunity more favourable to his designs. Such was the temerity of the existing hierarchy, that they might seem even to have purposely afforded to their opponents an advantage for the beginning of a contest, or rather to have been providentially infatuated. Leo X., after he had presided almost five years, having reduced himself to straits by his prodigal expenses of various kinds, and being desirous to complete the erection of St. Peter's church, begun at Rome by his predecessor, Julius II., after his example, had recourse to the sale of indulgences, the general nature of which Maimbourg describes much in the same manner as has been done in the foregoing chapter.* These he published

* Secken. p. 8. Let the reader remember that this incomparable author, Seckendorf, gives us all along the very words of his antago-

throughout the Christian world, granting freely to all who would pay money for the building of St. Peter's church, the licence of eating eggs and cheese in the time of Lent. This is one of the many ridiculous circumstances which attended Leo's indulgences, and it is gravely related by the papal historians. The promulgation of these indulgences in Germany was committed to a prelate, the brother of the elector of Brandenburg. His name was Albert, a man who, at that very time, held two archbishoprics, namely, those of Mentz and of Magdeburg, and who himself received immense profits from the sale. Albert delegated the office to John Tetzel, a Dominican inquisitor, well qualified for an employment of this kind. He was a bold and enterprising monk, of uncommon impudence, and had already distinguished himself in a similar transaction. He had proclaimed indulgences in support of the war against the Muscovites, and by that means had much enriched the Teutonic knights, who had undertaken that war. "This frontless monk," says a celebrated ecclesiastical historian,* "executed this iniquitous commission not only with matchless insolence, indecency, and fraud, but even carried his impiety so far as to derogate from the all-sufficient power and influence of the merits of Christ. Myconius assures us, that he himself heard Tetzel declaim with incredible effrontery concerning the unlimited power of the pope and the efficacy of indulgences. The people believed that the moment any person had paid the money for the indulgence he became certain of his salvation, and that the souls, for whom the indulgences were bought, were instantly released out of purgatory! So Maimbourg allows; and if the people really believed the current doctrine of the times, and looked on the preachers of indulgences as men worthy of credit, they must have believed so. We have formerly seen popes themselves hold this confident language. John Tetzel boasted that he had saved more souls from hell by his indulgences than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching! He assured the purchasers of them that their crimes, however

nist, whence the papal as well as the protestant materials are continually held up to view.

Even Du Pin allows that Leo was naturally proud and lofty; and he confesses that the erection of St. Peter's church was the occasion of that pope's having recourse to the sale of indulgences.—Book ii. chap. i.

* Mosheim.

enormous, would be forgiven; whence it became almost needless for him to bid them dismiss all fears concerning their salvation. For remission of sins being fully obtained, what doubt could there be of salvation? In the usual form of absolution, written by his own hand, he said, "May our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon thee, and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy passion! And I, by his authority, that of his apostles Peter and Paul, and of the most holy pope, granted and committed to me in these parts, do absolve thee, first, from all ecclesiastical censures, in whatever manner they have been incurred; and then from all the sins, transgressions, and excesses, how enormous soever they may be, even from such as are reserved for the cognizance of the holy see: and as far as the keys of the holy church extend, I remit to thee all the punishment which thou deservest in purgatory on their account; and I restore thee to the holy sacraments of the church, to the unity of the faithful, and to that innocence and purity which thou didst possess at baptism; so that when thou diest, the gates of punishment shall be shut, and the gates of the paradise of delight shall be opened; and if thou shalt not die at present this grace shall remain in full force when thou art at the point of death. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."*—Such was the style in which these formulas were written. It is impertinent to blame the abuses committed by the officials; it is not to be supposed that these formulas were without papal authority; neither has any thing of that kind ever been asserted. In regard to the effect of indulgences in delivering persons from the supposed torments of purgatory, the gross declarations of Tetzel in public are well known: "The moment the money tinkles in the chest, your father's soul mounts up out of purgatory." It does not appear that the rulers of the hierarchy ever found the least fault with Tetzel as exceeding his commission, till an opposition was openly made to the practice of indulgences. Whence it is evident that the protestants have NOT UNJUSTLY censured the corruptions of the court of Rome in this respect. Leo is declared to have granted, immediately and without hesitation,† the profits of the indulgences collected in Saxony and the neighbouring countries, as far as the Baltic, to his sister, the wife of prince Cibus, by way of gratitude for

* Seckend. p. 14.

† Maimbourg, p. 11.

personal favours, which he had received from the family of the Cibi ! The indulgences were farmed to the best bidders, and the undertakers employed such deputies to carry on the traffic as they thought most likely to promote their lucrative views. The inferior officers concerned in this commerce were daily seen* in public houses enjoying themselves in riot and voluptuousness. In fine, whatever the greatest enemy of popery could have wished, was at that time exhibited with the most undisguised impudence and temerity, as if on purpose to render that wicked ecclesiastical system infamous before all mankind.

It may not be improper to introduce the following anecdote concerning Tetzal, the audacious vender of the papal indulgences.

When the emperor Maximilian was at Inspruck he was so offended at the wickedness and impudence of Tetzal, who had been convicted of adultery, that he condemned him to death, and had intended to have him seized and put into a bag, and flung into the river *Œnoponte* ; but he was prevented by the solicitations of Frederic, the elector of Saxony, who, fortunately for Tetzal, happened to be there at the time.†

Burnet informs us, that the scandalous sale of pardons and indulgences had, in his day, by no means so completely ceased in popish countries as is commonly taken for granted. He says, that in Spain and Portugal there is every where a commissary, who manages the sale with the most infamous circumstances imaginable. In Spain, the king, by an agreement with the pope, has the profits. In Portugal, the king and the pope go shares.

“ In the year 1709, the privateers of Bristol took a galeon, in which they found five hundred bales of bulls” for indulgences . . . “ and sixteen reams were in a bale. So that they reckon the whole came to 3,840,000. These bulls are imposed on the people and sold, the lowest at three ryals, a little more than twenty-pence, but to some at about eleven pounds of our money. . . . All are obliged to buy them in Lent.”‡ The author adds, “ Besides the account given of this in the cruising voyage I have a particular attestation of it by captain Dampier.”§

* Maimbourg, p. 12.

† Melch. Adam.

‡ This continues in Spain at the present day ! See Blanco White's *Letters*, and also his *Evidences of Catholicism*. Lond. 1825.—ED.

§ *Introduct.* p. 20 vol. iii.

Protestants in our times are not sufficiently aware of the evils from which, under the blessing of God, a great part of Europe has been delivered by the rational, animated, and persevering exertions of Luiher, his associates, and other early reformers.

Indulgences were granted also under the pontificate of Leo X. on many PARTICULAR occasions. The consecrated host had been lost at the parish church at Schiniedeberg, in the diocese of Misnia: in consequence of which the pastor had excommunicated the deacon and the porter of the church. These men, whom the superstition of the times had made culprits, had, however, recourse to the generosity of Tetzels, who was in the neighbourhood, and who furnished them with a diploma of absolution.* The prices of these indulgences were accommodatèd to the various circumstances of petitioners; and thus a plan was formed, and was successfully carrying into execution, which would infallibly lay all orders of men under contribution. The prodigious sale of indulgences evinces both the profound ignorance of the age, and also the power of superstitious fears, with which the consciences of men were then distressed. This, however, was the very situation of things which opened the way for the reception of the gospel. But who was to proclaim the gospel in its native beauty and simplicity? To give a satisfactory answer to this question was no easy matter. The princes, the bishops, and the learned men of the times, all saw this scandalous traffic respecting the pardon of sins; but no one was found who possessed the knowledge, the courage, and the honesty, necessary to detect the fraud, and to lay open to mankind the true doctrine of salvation by the remission of sins through Jesus Christ. But at length an obscure pastor appeared, who alone and without help, began to erect the standard of sound religion. No man who believes that "the preparation of the heart is from the Lord," will doubt whether Martin Luther, in this great undertaking, was moved by the Spirit of God. This extraordinary person, at that time an Augustine monk, was professor or lecturer of the university of Wittemberg, in Saxony. That academy was at once a college of students and a society of monks. Frederic the Wise, elector of Saxony, ardently desirous of promoting literary knowledge, had added the former character to the latter, and always showed a steady

* Seckend. p. 15.

regard to Luther, on account of his skill and industry in advancing the reputation of that infant seminary of knowledge, which then was very low and abject, both in its revenues and its exterior appearance. Luther preached also from time to time, and heard confessions.* In the memorable year 1517, it happened that certain persons repeating their confessions before him, and owning themselves to be atrocious offenders, yet refused to comply with the penances which he enjoined them, because they said they were possessed of diplomas of indulgences, Luther was struck with the evident absurdity of such conduct, and ventured to refuse them absolution. The persons thus rejected complained loudly to Tetzel, who was preaching in a town at no great distance. The Dominican inquisitor had not been accustomed to contradiction. He stormed and frowned, and menaced every one who dared to oppose him; and sometimes he ordered a pile of wood to be constructed and set on fire, for the purpose of striking terror into the minds of heretics. Luther was, at that time, only thirty-four years old, vigorous both in mind and body, fresh from the schools, and fervent in the Scriptures. He saw crowds flock to Wittemberg and the neighbouring towns to purchase indulgences, and having no clear idea of the nature of that traffic, yet sensible of the obvious evils with which it must be attended, he began to signify, in a gentle manner, from the pulpit, that the people might be better employed than in running, from place to place, to procure INDULGENCES. So cautiously did this great man begin a work, the consequences of which he then so little foresaw. He did not so much as know, at that time, who were the receivers of the money. In proof of this, we find he wrote to Albert, archbishop of Mentz, who he understood had appointed Tetzel to this employment, but with whose personal† concern in the gains he was then unacquainted, entreating him to withdraw the licence of Tetzel, and expressing his fears of the evils which would attend the sale of indulgences. He sent him likewise certain theses, which he had drawn up in the form of queries, concerning this subject. He expressed himself with the greatest caution and modesty. In fact, he saw enough to alarm a tender conscience, but he knew not well where to fix the blame. He was not, as yet, fully satisfied in his own mind, either as to the extent of

* Seckend. p. 17.

† See p. 245.

the growing mischief, or the precise nature of its cause. In this state of doubt and anxiety he wrote also to other bishops, and particularly to his own diocesan, the bishop of Brandenburg,* with whom he was a particular favourite.

Nothing can be more orderly, candid, and open, than this conduct of our reformer.† Zeal and charity were here united with the most perfect regard to ecclesiastical discipline. The bishop of Brandenburg revered the integrity of Luther, while he was aware of the dangerous ground on which he was advancing. “You will oppose the church,” he replied, “you cannot think in what troubles you will involve yourself; you had much better be still and quiet.” This was not a language calculated to repress the firm and intrepid spirit of the Saxon monk; for, though by no means as yet a competent master of the points in debate, he saw they were of too great magnitude for a conscientious pastor to pass them by unnoticed. He also knew the manners of lower life, and could judge, far better than the bishops in general could do, of the mischievous consequences which were to be apprehended. With deliberate steadiness he ventured therefore to persevere; and having tried in vain to procure the concurrence of the dignitaries of the church, he published his Theses, ninety-five in number; and in fifteen days they were spread throughout Germany. Their effect on the minds of men was rapid and powerful, though Tetzels, by threats, had silenced some pastors who had faintly opposed him, and though bishops and doctors, through fear of the flames, remained perfectly silent.

“Thus,” says Luther,—for much of the foregoing account is taken from his own words,—“I was commended as an excellent doctor, who alone had the spirit to attempt so great an undertaking: but the fame which I had

* Seckend. p. 16.

† Du Pin, in conjunction with all the Roman catholic writers, asserts that Luther’s zeal for the interest of his own order led him to oppose the doctrine of Indulgences. The best refutation of this calumny is to be derived from a fair statement of facts. It has been said likewise, that Staupitius, the vicar-general of Luther’s order of monks, and the elector of Saxony, stimulated Luther to commence his opposition. But there is no where to be found the smallest proof of these assertions. The love of truth itself appears from his whole conduct to have influenced his measures, and the story needs only to be fairly told in order to convince any candid person that this was the case.

acquired was by no means agreeable to my mind ; because I had then some doubts concerning the nature of indulgences, and because I feared that the task was beyond my powers and capacity.”*

But the real motives of Luther will be discovered in the surest manner by a brief review of the manners and spirit of the man previous to his open declarations respecting indulgences. This Saxon reformer was born in the year 1483, at Isleben, a town belonging to the county of Mansfield. His father wrought in the mines of Mansfield, which were, at that time, very famous ; and, after the birth of his son, Martin Luther, removed to that town, became a proprietor in the mines, discharged public offices there, and was esteemed by all men for his integrity. He gave a very liberal education to Martin, who was remarkable for dutiful affection to his parents in general, though, in one instance, to be mentioned presently, he was led away by the superstition of the times so as to offend his father exceedingly. After he had made great proficiency in his studies at Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt, he commenced master of arts in the university of Erfurt at the age of twenty ; and having now finished his course of philosophy, he began to give close attention to the science of the civil law, and is said to have intended to advance himself by pleading at the bar ; but he was diverted from his purpose by an accident.† As he was walking in the fields with one of his most intimate friends, his companion was suddenly killed by lightning, or by some violence ; and Luther himself was so terrified, partly by this event, and partly by the horrid noise of the thunder, that while his mind was in the utmost consternation he formed the sudden resolution of withdrawing from the world, and of throwing himself into the monastery at Erfurt. His father, a man of plain, but sound understanding, strongly remonstrated against this resolution. The son as strongly pleaded what he considered as a terrible call from heaven, to take upon himself the monastic vow. “ Take care,” replied the father, “ that you are not ensnared by a delusion of the devil.” But the mind of Martin Luther was determined ; and filial disobedience, in such a case, was looked on as a virtue, and encouraged by the church

* Seckend. p. 16.

† Du Pin. Moreri. Maimbourg.

of Rome. To the great grief and mortification of his father, he entered the monastery in the year 1505.*

In one of his letters he owns, that from the very beginning of his monastic life he was constantly sad and dejected;† and being unable to give peace to his mind he, at length, opened his griefs to John Staupitius, vicar-general of the Augustine monks in Germany, a man highly esteemed by Frederic the Wise, and consulted by him particularly in things which concerned the university of Wittenberg. Staupitius himself appears to have had some serious views of religion, and a degree of knowledge at that time very uncommon. After Luther had explained to him the uneasy thoughts with which he was burdened, “You do not know,” said he, “how useful and necessary this trial may be to you; God does not thus exercise you for nothing; you will one day see that he will employ

* The various accounts of authors respecting the immediate incidents which determined Luther to retire from the world into a monastery, agree in the main, but not precisely in every circumstance. It is very remarkable that Melancthon, who speaks of the occasion of this sudden resolution as a thing which was well known, and which he himself had heard Luther relate, is not only silent concerning any storm of thunder and lightning, but expressly says he does not know by what accident Luther’s companion was killed. The story of the thunderstorm appears also to have had little weight on the mind of Melchior Adamus, who wrote the lives of the German divines that promoted the Reformation: yet, from the very respectable evidence collected by Seckendorf and others, the most probable conclusion seems to be,

1. That Luther’s companion was not killed by lightning, but murdered by some unknown person, who left him miserably bruised and wounded. His name is said to have been Alexius.

2. That Luther himself, while walking at a distance from house or town, was so alarmed by a storm of thunder that he fell upon the ground, and in that situation made a sort of vow to lead a monastic life in future, if he should be delivered from the impending danger.

3. That he afterwards considered this vow as binding on his conscience, which was, at that time, in a remarkably tender state.

4. That soon after these events, which took place when he was about twenty-one years of age, he called together his particular friends and fellow-students, and entertained them in his usual way, with music and a convivial treat; and when they had not the smallest suspicion of his intentions, he besought them to be cheerful with him that evening, for it was the last time, he said, they would ever see him in his present situation, as he had actually determined to begin the monastic life. In the morning he wrote farewell letters to them; and sent his parents the ring and gown which belonged to him as master of arts; and at the same time he unfolded to them, in writing, the grounds of his resolution. They grieved excessively that such great talents as his should be buried in a state of almost non-existence. But for the space of a month nobody was admitted to speak to him. Seck.—Luth. Ep.—Melch. Adam.

† Seckend. p. 19.

you as his servant for great purposes." The event gave ample honour to the sagacity of Staupitius, and it is very evident that a deep and solid conviction of sin, leading the mind to the search of Scripture truth, and the investigation of the way of peace, was the main spring of Luther's whole after-conduct; and, indeed, this view of our reformer's state of mind furnishes the only key to the discovery of the real motives by which he was influenced in his public transactions. Rash and prejudiced writers of the popish persuasion choose to represent him as having been under the dominion of avarice or ambition; but till they can produce some proofs beyond their own suspicions or bare affirmations, all such slanderous accusations must fall to the ground. In truth, no man was ever more free from avarice and ambition: the fear of God predominated to a very high degree in Luther's mind; and a nice sensibility of conscience, attended with an uncommon insight into the depth of our natural depravity, allowed him no rest. As yet he understood not the Scriptures; nor felt that peace of God which passeth understanding. He had too much light to sit down in slothful content and indifference, and too little to discern the rich treasures of the gospel, and apply its healing promises to deep convictions of sin and misery. He remained for above a year not only in constant anxiety and suspense, but in perpetual dread and alarm. All these things are abundantly evident, and beyond all contradiction, to those who are acquainted with his writings.

In the second year after Luther had entered into the monastery, he accidentally met with a Latin Bible in the library. It proved to him a treasure. Then he first discovered that there were MORE scripture-passages extant than those which were read to the people: for the Scriptures were, at that time, very little known in the world. In reading the word of God with prayer, his understanding was gradually enlightened, and he found some beams of evangelical comfort to dart into his soul. The same year he was refreshed in his sickness by the discourse of an old monk, who showed him that remission of sins was to be apprehended by faith alone, and referred him to a passage in Bernard's sermon on the annunciation, where the same doctrine was taught. With incredible ardour he now gave himself up to the study of the Scriptures and the books of Augustine. He was, at length, regarded as the most

ingenious and learned man of his order in Germany. But the soul of Luther was constantly panting for something very different from secular glory.

He was ordained in the year 1507, and in the next year was called to the professorship at Wittemberg by Staupitius, where an opportunity was afforded for the display of his talents both as a teacher of philosophy and as a popular preacher. He excelled in both capacities. Eloquent by nature, and powerful in moving the affections, acquainted also in a very uncommon manner with the elegances and energy of his native tongue, he became the wonder of his age. These things are allowed very liberally by his enemies ;* but it ought to be observed, that the exercises of his own mind, by which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was led more and more into Christian truth, would naturally add a strength to his oratory, unattainable by those who speak not from the heart. Martin Polichius, a doctor of law and medicine, exclaimed, “ This monk will confound all the doctors, will exhibit new doctrine, and reform the whole Roman church ; for he is intent on reading the writings of the prophets and apostles, and he depends on the word of Jesus Christ ; this, neither the philosophers nor the sophists can subvert.” He who spake thus was himself looked on as a prodigy of wisdom ; and, I suppose, a degree of discernment, less than his, might have shown an attentive observer, that the didactic plan of Luther was that of an original thinker, who was not likely to confine himself to the beaten track, but to produce something new to mankind. Melancthon’s concise account entirely agrees with this statement : “ Polichius,” says he, “ often declared, that there was a strength of intellect in this man, which he plainly foresaw would produce a revolution in the popular and scholastic religion of the times.” Nor does it seem at all improbable, that if Luther had followed merely the dictates of his own adventurous genius, he might have been the inventor of some novel theological schemes and doctrines. But all tendency to fanciful excursions in the important concerns of religion, was effectually restrained and chastised in the mind of our reformer, by his profound reverence for the written word : moreover, from his first entrance into the monastery, he appears to have been taught of God, and to have been led more and more into such discoveries of native

* Maimbourg, p. 18. Varillas, p. 22.

depravity, as render a man low in his own eyes, and dispose him to receive the genuine gospel of Christ.

In the year 1510 he was sent to Rome on some business, which related to his own monastery; and this he discharged with so much ability and success, that on his return he was compelled by the vicar-general to assume the degree of doctor of divinity. He writes, that he did this with great reluctance, and entirely from obedience to his superiors. It is easy indeed for a man to say this; but, from the mouth of Luther, it is with me decisive of its truth. For VERACITY and INTEGRITY evidently appear to have remarkably entered into the character of this reformer, as indeed these virtues are always to be eminently found in those who have had the most genuine experience of Christianity. The expenses attending this high degree were defrayed by the elector of Saxony, who always admired Luther, and was perfectly convinced of the profundity of his learning, and the rectitude of his views in religion. While he had been at Rome, he discovered something of the singularity of his character, which had attracted the attention of the Italian priests. The external rites of religion, which to them were matter of political formality, with him were serious exercises. While they hurried over their exercises of the mass, he performed his with a solemnity and devotion which excited their ridicule, and they told him to repeat them with more rapidity. A thoughtful mind like his, could not conceive that religious employments should be discharged with levity, and he returned to his monastery more fully convinced than ever, that Rome was not the scene in which a serious pastor could properly learn the rudiments of religion. He studied and taught the Scriptures with increasing ardour and alacrity, and after he had been created a doctor, in the year 1512, he expounded the Psalms and the epistle to the Romans, to the great satisfaction of his audience. He studied the Hebrew and the Greek languages, and highly valued the philological labours of the famous Erasmus of Rotterdam, the renowned reviver of classical literature; and while he concurred with that great man in his contempt of monastic trifles, he was intensely studious to learn better and more scriptural notions of God and his attributes, than those which Erasmus so ingeniously satirized. To build was, however, found much more arduous, as it is certainly a far

more important work, than to pull down; and from the time that Luther was created a doctor of divinity, he conscientiously devoted his time and talents to the sacred office. Already he was suspected of heresy, because of his dislike to the scholastic doctrines; and he was induced, both from the natural soundness of his understanding, and from the spiritual exercises of his own heart, to reject the Aristotelian corruptions of theology, and to study the genuine doctrines of Scripture.

In 1516 he thus wrote to a friend :* “ I desire to know what your soul is doing ; whether, wearied at length of its own righteousness, it learns to refresh itself and to rest in the righteousness of Christ. The temptation of presumption in our age is strong in many, and specially in those who labour to be just and good with all their might, and at the same time are ignorant of the righteousness of God, which in Christ is conferred upon us with a rich exuberance of gratuitous liberality. They seek in themselves to work that which is good, in order that they may have a confidence of standing before God, adorned with virtues and merits, which is an impossible attempt. You, my friend, used to be of this same opinion, or rather this same mistake ; so was I ; but now I am fighting against the error, but have not yet prevailed.”

This interesting and instructive letter demonstrates what was the religious frame of our monk at that time. He had received the grace of Christ, and knew the true and only way of salvation ; though, in his own eyes at least, he was weak in the faith. He both felt and preached the fundamentals of the gospel, before he appeared in the field against popery ; and if he had not been absolutely persecuted into a secession, such was his modesty and love of peace and order, and so little had he then studied the particular corruptions of the hierarchy, that he would, in all probability, have continued to his death an obedient son of the Roman church. Many excellent men had done so before him ; because, through inadvertency, they had remained unconscious of the absurdities of the predominant religion. The methods of Providence were, however, admirable in conducting Luther into the depths of a controversy, to which he seems to have had no inclination. Indulgences were preached, and he saw the evil of them in a practical, rather than a theoretical light, and

* Seckend. p. 20.

was thence drawn undesignedly into a contest, the effects of which were salutary to so many nations. Those, who apprehend that when he began the contest he was ignorant of the nature of the gospel, appear not to have known the order and method by which the mind of the Saxon reformer was conducted into religious truth.

In the year 1516 Luther was appointed, by Staupitius, subaltern vicar; by which office he was authorized to visit about forty monasteries in Misnia and Thuringia. Returning to Wittemberg in June, he wrote to Spalatinus, who was the secretary of the elector, and always showed himself a steady friend of Luther, in terms which expressed the frank effusions of his own heart, on a review of the state of religion in the country, which the visitation had given him an opportunity of accurately observing. "Many things, said he, please your prince, and look great in his eyes, which are displeasing to God. In secular wisdom, I confess that he is of all men most knowing; but, in things pertaining to God, and which relate to the salvation of souls, I must own that he is blind sevenfold." This was the true character of Frederic, at that time, though justly esteemed the wisest prince of the age; and though he was sincerely and ingenuously desirous of promoting religion and virtue. In fact, his good understanding was oppressed with a heavy load of the most pitiable superstitions. He was, however, by no means displeased with Luther for using freedom of speech; and there is reason to believe that, afterwards, he learnt more of the true nature of the gospel, though by very slow degrees.

As George Spalatinus appears to have been one of the most intimate friends of Luther, it is desirable to introduce some particulars respecting him. He was of all others the person to whom the reformer, in his greatest difficulties and dangers, intrusted his most secret feelings and designs. Spalatinus by his good sense, his opportunity of easy access to the elector of Saxony, and his sincere attachment to Luther, was, on many occasions, useful to the cause of the Reformation in general, as well as to his friend in particular.

A private epistolary correspondence between them seems to have been frequent and uninterrupted during many years: the historian frequently refers to certain parts of it, which are extremely interesting. Hence the following short account of Georgius Spalatinus himself may have its use.

He was a Franconian of considerable learning and great discretion. He was about a year older than Luther, but appears not to have begun the study of divinity with any degree of earnestness, till he was more than thirty years of age. He requested his friend to give him his advice concerning the best method of acquiring sacred knowledge. The answer of Luther on this occasion well deserves to be remembered and practised by every student in divinity. After recommending to his notice certain parts of the writings of Jerom, Ambrose, and Augustine, he exhorts him always to begin his studies with "SERIOUS PRAYER;" for, says he, there is really NO INTERPRETER OF THE DIVINE WORD, BUT ITS OWN AUTHOR. He adds, READ THE BIBLE IN ORDER FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END.

Luther, in his letters to Spalatinus, addresses him sometimes as librarian, and sometimes as registrar of the elector of Saxony, but takes care, at the same time, to call him minister of Jesus Christ. In fact, Spalatinus was both secretary and privy-counsellor to the elector; he accompanied him to several German diets; and at his court he preached and performed the duties of domestic chaplain. A stronger proof of the high estimation in which he was supposed to be held by Frederic the Wise need not be adduced, than that in the year 1519 the pope himself, Leo X., condescended to write a letter to his "Beloved Son George Spalatinus," in which, after acknowledging, in the most flattering terms, the great influence and weight which Spalatinus had with the elector, and how very much that prince valued the prudent and wholesome advice of his secretary, he exhorts him "in the Lord, and with his paternal authority requires him, to contribute every thing in his power to repress the detestable temerity of brother Martin Luther, that child of Satan, whose grievous heresy was spreading among the credulous people."

In the affairs of religion, Spalatinus used all his influence to strengthen the party of Luther; but he was often so vexed and even dispirited on account of the little attention that was paid to his own ministerial exertions, that he seriously thought of quitting his situation at the elector's court. Luther opposed this intention in the most animated and decisive terms: "Take care," said he, "that you get the better of these thoughts which harass your mind, or, at least, learn to dismiss them. You must not desert the ministry of the word of God. Christ has

called you to his service. Yield yourself to his good pleasure. At present you do not understand the importance of your situation ; you will understand it better by and by. The desire you have to quit your post is a mere temptation ; the reason of which, we, who are spectators, see better than you do yourself. In a case of this sort, you should rather trust the judgment of your friends than your own. We are the means, which, on this occasion, the Lord uses for your comfort and advice. We call God to witness, that in wishing you to continue in your vocation we have no other object but his WILL and his GLORY. I consider it as a certain sign of your ministry being acceptable to God, that you are thus tempted. If it were otherwise, you would not be weary, and deplore your unfruitfulness ; you would rather bustle, and seek to please men, as those do who talk much, though they were never sent with a commission to preach the gospel.” . . .

On the same subject Luther writes thus : “ You ask my advice, my dear Spalatinus, whether you should quit your situation at the elector’s court. This is my opinion. I own there is reason in what you allege. ‘ The word of God is disregarded.’ And it is a wise rule, ‘ not to pour out speeches where there is no attention.’ But, I say, if there be ANY persons that love to hear, you should not cease to speak. I myself acted on the principle which I now recommend to you ; otherwise I might long ago have been silent amidst this prodigious contempt of the word of God. Therefore, I affirm, that unless you have some better reason, which lies heavy on your conscience, this perverse and unreasonable inattention of wicked men is not a sufficient cause for your leaving the court. Consider of how much service you may be to many, from the weight of your influence with the prince, and from your long experience of the ways of courtiers. Whatever may be the abilities of your successor, Frederic the Wise will not trust him much, till time has furnished proofs of his integrity. On the whole, I cannot so much as conceive any reason that will justify the step you speak of, but one, namely, marriage. Stay, therefore, where you are ; or if you do depart, let a wife be the cause.”

Spalatinus continued in his employments until his death, which happened in his grand climacteric, sixty-three, in the year of our Lord 1545. Great grief and depression of spirits are said to have hastened his end. There is

extant a most judicious, consolatory letter, which Luther wrote to him the preceding year, and which gave him much comfort. Spalatinus, it seems, through ignorance or inadvertency, had consented to the illegal marriage of a clergyman of bad character; and the matter hung heavy on his mind. Luther first wisely cautions his friend against giving way to too much sorrow. He was well acquainted, he said, with the dreadful effects of it. He had felt those effects in his own case: and he had seen them in the cases of others. He instanced Melancthon, who fell into a most dangerous disease, owing to great grief. He then takes up the case at the worst, namely, on the supposition that Spalatinus had been really much to blame in the affair; and shows that still he ought not to despair of the grace of God, who was ready to pardon not only the slight faults, but the most grievous sins of the penitent. He tells him, that formerly he himself had been in a similar affliction of mind, which had brought him to the very edge of the grave; but that Staupitius had been of great use to him by saying, "you are endeavouring to quiet your conscience by considering yourself as a slight, outward, superficial sinner; but you ought to know that Jesus Christ is ready to save the greatest and the vilest of sinners." Lastly, Luther, as a kind brother, exhorts him in the sweetest and most emphatic language to derive his comfort from a view of the gracious Redeemer.

Thus we find Luther always the same man. Exercised in the school of adversity, he feels for others. Naturally tender and grateful, he loves his friends, and administers every comfort in his power. His eye is always fixed on the next world; and the proper business of THIS life, with him, is the care of the soul. The account just given is an admirable specimen of his talents as a spiritual adviser. How many, in a like case, through a mistaken affection, or through fear of giving offence to an aged, dying friend, would have contented themselves with saying nothing but "smooth things"* concerning human infirmity, general sincerity, and the venial nature of sins of inadvertence, &c. But Martin Luther, though behind no man in compassion and benevolence, kept two things constantly in mind, the glory of the Redeemer, and the salvation of men's souls. Hence, on these subjects particularly, he always spoke without disguise.

* Isa. xxx. 10.

In October, 1516, Luther communicated to his learned friend, Spalatinus, his thoughts concerning certain of the fathers, and also concerning Erasmus's method of interpreting Scripture.* This memorable epistle deserves the particular attention of the reader, as it furnishes judicious and connected observations on Augustine and his contemporaries, and on the fathers both who preceded and who followed them; and as it likewise suggests very useful reflections on the comparative merits of theologians in different periods, from the days of Cyprian to those of Luther and Erasmus.

Luther, to George Spalatinus:—"That which strikes my mind in considering Erasmus, is this; in interpreting the apostle's account of the righteousness of works, or of the law, he understands by these terms ceremonial observances *ONLY*. In the next place, though he admits the doctrine of original sin, he will not allow that the apostle speaks of it in the fifth chapter to the Romans. Now, if he had carefully read Augustine's *Anti-Pelagian* tracts, especially his account of the spirit and the letter, of the guilt of sin and the remission of it; and had observed how he speaks in perfect unison with the best of the fathers, from Cyprian to Ambrose, he might have better understood the apostle Paul, and also have conceived more highly of Augustine as an expositor, than he has hitherto done. In dissenting from Erasmus's judgment in this point, I must frankly declare that I as much prefer Augustine's expositions to those of Jerom, as he prefers those of Jerom to Augustine's. I am, it is true, an Augustine monk; but that circumstance has no influence on my judgment; for till I had read this father's works I had not the least prejudice in his favour. But I see that Jerom studiously endeavours to draw every thing to a merely historical meaning;† and, what is very extraordinary, where he expounds the Scripture as it were occasionally or accidentally, as in his epistles for instance, he does it in a much sounder manner than when he interprets professedly and on purpose. The righteousness of the law is by no means confined to ceremonies; for though it includes these, it still more directly respects an obedience

* *Lib. i. ep. 20.*

† A merely historical meaning. A mere narration of facts, as opposed to a spiritual meaning, and a practical application to every man's conscience.

to the whole decalogue ; which obedience, when it takes place to a certain degree, and yet has not Christ for its foundation, though it may produce such men as your Fabriciuses, and your Reguluses, that is, very upright moralists according to man's judgment, has nothing in it of the nature of genuine righteousness. For men are not made truly righteous, as Aristotle supposes, by performing certain actions which are externally good,—for they may still be counterfeit characters ;—but, men must have righteous principles in the first place, and then they will not fail to perform righteous actions. God first respects Abel, and then his offering.* I beg you would put Erasmus in mind of these things. In so doing, you will discharge the duties both of a friend and of a Christian. As on the one hand I hope and wish that he may be celebrated through the Christian world, so on the other I fear many may be induced, by the authority of his name, to patronise that literal and lifeless mode of interpreting Scripture, into which almost all commentators have fallen since the time of Augustine. I may be thought presumptuous and, perhaps, severe in thus criticising many great men : my apology is, that I feel a concern for the cause of true theology, and for the salvation of the brethren."

A little before the controversy concerning indulgences, George, duke of Saxony, entreated Staupitius to send him some learned and worthy preacher. The vicar-general, in compliance with his request, despatched Luther with strong recommendations to Dresden. George gave him an order to preach : the sum of Luther's sermon was this ;† That no man ought to despair of the possibility of salvation ; that those who heard the word of God with attentive minds, were true disciples of Christ, and were elected and predestinated to eternal life. He enlarged on the subject, and showed that the whole doctrine of predestination, if the foundation be laid in Christ, was of singular efficacy to dispel that fear, by which men, trembling under the sense of their own unworthiness, are tempted to fly from God, who ought to be our sovereign refuge. An honourable matron, who attended the palace, and who had heard Luther, was asked by George, the duke, at dinner, how she liked the discourse. " I should die in peace," she said, " if I could hear such another sermon." The duke, in much anger, replied, " I would

* Gen. iv.

† Seckend. p. 23.

give a large sum of money that a sermon of this sort, which encourages men in a licentious course of life, had never been preached." And he repeated this several times. Within the space of a month the lady was confined in bed by sickness, and soon after died, rejoicing in her prospects of future glory. Fabricius concludes the account with saying,* "From that time Luther came no more to Dresden." That capital of modern Saxony was then part of the dukedom of George, who proved one of the most virulent enemies of Lutheranism. He was the uncle of prince Frederic the Wise. Like pharisaic formalists in all ages, he perversely misconstrued the doctrine of free salvation by Jesus Christ, which Luther preached, and which is intended to enable humble and repenting souls to serve God with lively faith and cheerful hope. The duke of Saxony, I observe, perversely misconstrued this doctrine, as though it had a tendency to persuade men to live in sin; but the good matron above-mentioned, who resided at his court, appears to have tasted of that bitterness of true conviction of sin, which only can render the doctrine of grace delightful and salutary to the mind.

How precious this doctrine must have been to the mind of Luther himself, may be conceived from a well authenticated circumstance,† which evinces the state of mental bondage in which he had been held. Having, for many days, neglected, through the intenseness of his studies, to recite the canonical hours,‡ he, in compliance with the pope's decrees, and to satisfy his conscience, actually shut himself up in his closet, and recited what he had omitted with punctilious exactness, and with such severe attention and abstinence, as reduced his strength exceedingly, brought on nearly a total want of sleep for the space of five weeks, and almost produced symptoms of a weakened intellect. Is it to be wondered at, that he who, at length, found relief and liberty by the grace of Christ, should be zealous to preach the mystery of the cross to his fellow-creatures.§

* Orig. Sax. lib. vii.

+ Vol. i. p. 344. Bavar. Seck. p. 21.

‡ The Rev. Blanco White, himself formerly a Romish priest, states that the daily service which each priest is required to repeat to himself in an audible voice every day, cannot, by constant practice, or the most rapid utterance, be brought within the compass of less than an hour and a half in the twenty-four.—Ed.

§ There is a further account of Luther by Melancthon, which will hereafter claim our attention.

I have now laid before the reader some interesting particulars of the private life of Luther, previous to his assumption of that public character, which has made his name so illustrious. The serious Christian will adore the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, which, by preparatory exercises of soul, had directed this extraordinary personage into the true light and liberty of the gospel of Christ, and fitted him for the great work to which he was called. At the same time, it seems a certain fact, that the Saxon reformer was not induced to act the part, which has given so great a celebrity to his name, from motives of personal malice, or of ambition, or of avarice, but purely from the fear of God, from a conscientious regard to evangelical truth, from a zeal for the divine glory, and for the profit of the souls of his fellow-creatures.

There are two points concerning Luther, on which all the most respectable, even of the papal party, unanimously concur in their testimony. The one is, that his learning, genius, and capacity, were of the first magnitude. It may seem proper to mention this, because some modern writers, who appear almost wholly ignorant of the real character of the man, have rashly represented him as a person of contemptible knowledge. But this is the common method of treating many great men, whose studies and attainments happened to be but little connected with the pursuits and discoveries of the eighteenth century; and till readers learn the practice of so much candour as may dispose them to make equitable allowances for the taste of the times, in which men of great abilities and great accomplishments have made their appearance, such superficial authors will always find admirers. The other particular relative to our illustrious reformer is this; that his life is allowed to be without blemish. In fact, the Romanists, for the purpose of indulging the spirit of censure, are obliged to have recourse to surmises for want of realities. When we are much out of humour with a person, it is human nature to ascribe his very best actions to bad motives. But the slanderous representations of enemies ought never to be substituted in the place of authentic documents. The writers alluded to may FANCY that Luther's conduct is best accounted for on the supposition that pride, vanity, ambition, and resentment, were the ruling passions of the man they dislike; nevertheless, all readers of cool

judgment will take care to distinguish between their prejudiced, ill-natured conjectures, and substantial proofs.

Far be it, however, from the historian's design to insinuate that there were no faults or defects in the character which he so much admires. Besides the incessant ebullitions of native depravity, in the confession of which no man was ever more earnest than Luther, all real Christians, the most eminent saints not excepted, have their infirmities and their faults, which cost them much inward pain and sorrow. The very candid and accurate memorialist, Seckendorf, who is so useful to my researches, defies all the adversaries of Luther to fix any just censure on his character, except what may be ranked under two heads, namely, a disposition to anger, and an indulgence in jesting. Beyond all doubt, the Saxon reformer was of a choleric temper, and he too often gave way to this constitutional evil, as he himself bitterly laments. Perhaps also he too much encouraged his natural propensity to facetiousness. The monks of his time were, in general, guilty of the like fault, and often to so great a degree, as very improperly to mix scurrilities with sacred subjects. Moreover, the vices and the follies of those whom Luther opposed afforded a strong temptation both to a spirit of anger and of ridicule. For, however severe he may be thought in many of his invectives, we are compelled, by unquestionable evidence, to confess, that his keenest satirical pieces never reached the demerits of those who ruled the church in that age. But, after all that can be said in mitigation, it must be owned that a reformer ought to have considered not so much what they deserved, as what became the character he had to support; namely, that of a serious Christian, zealous for the honour of his God, displeased with the vices of the Romish priesthood, and grieved on account of the pitiable ignorance of the people, yet more desirous of curing the prevailing evils than of exposing them.

But we ought to make considerable allowances for the great difference between the manners and customs of our times and those of the sixteenth century. These blemishes in Luther, doubtless, appear much more offensive to us, than they did in his own time among men of ruder manners, and accustomed to a greater freedom both of action and of expression in their mutual intercourse.

In contemplating the qualities and endowments of

LUTHER, we have no hesitation in affirming, that it is not easy to find a more blameless, or even a more excellent character. No man, since the apostles' days, had penetrated into the sacred oracles with such singular felicity. He was endowed with a greatness of soul far beyond the common lot of men : dangerous gift in a fallen creature ! It was through divine grace that he was enabled to display and persevere in a conduct the most consistent, uncorrupt, and disinterested. His bold and adventurous spirit never appears in any one instance to have made the smallest encroachment on the most perfect integrity. Humane, generous, and placable, he was rarely diverted from the path of equity ; and, notwithstanding the uncommon vehemence of his temper, he was often submissive and condescending. With an exquisite sensibility and readiness of conception, with a zeal and an imagination which never remitted their ardour for a single moment, he was most perfectly free from enthusiasm ; and with a great capacity and unparalleled intrepidity, he seems to have been devoid of ambition, and contented to live all his days in very moderate circumstances. ONLY the Wise Disposer of all events, for the glory of his own name, and for the revival of true religion in Europe, by the effectual operation of his Holy Spirit, could have produced, at the season when most wanted, so faithful a champion, one possessed of so much vigour of intellect, of so daring a spirit, and of so truly humble and Christian-like a temper.

Such was the illustrious Luther when he was called upon by Divine Providence to enter the lists, alone and without one assured human ally, against the hosts of the pretended successor of St. Peter, who was then domineering over the Christian world in all his grandeur and plenitude of power.

I shall conclude this chapter with laying before the reader several concise testimonies to the talents and virtues of Luther, extracted from the writings of popish authors, who will not be suspected of any partiality towards the man, whom they have been accustomed to consider as a detestable heretic. To transcribe the various encomiums which have been written on this celebrated character by his friends and admirers, by protestant authors, and by historians in general, would be an endless labour.

The jesuit Maimbourg, in his history of Lutheranism,

records many particulars respecting the learning and abilities of this celebrated heretic, as he calls him, which have not yet been mentioned :

“ He possessed a quick and penetrating genius : he was indefatigable in his studies, and frequently so absorbed in them as to abstain from meat for whole days together. He acquired great knowledge of languages and of the fathers. He was remarkably strong and healthy, and of a sanguine choleric temperament. His eyes were piercing and full of fire. His voice sweet, and vehement when once fairly raised. He had a stern countenance ; and though most intrepid and high spirited, he could assume the appearance of modesty and humility whenever he pleased, which, however, was not often the case. In his breast was lodged plenty of fuel for pride and presumption : hence his indiscriminate contempt of whatever opposed his heresies ; hence his brutal treatment of kings, emperors, the pope, and of every thing in the world that is deemed most sacred and inviolable. Passionate, resentful, and domineering, he was continually aiming to distinguish himself by venting novel doctrines, and on no occasion could be induced to retract what he had once advanced. He maintained, that Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Scotus, Bonaventura, and others, had undermined the foundations of true philosophy and of Christian theology ; and he endeavoured to raise up a system of his own upon the ruins of those very great geniuses. This is an exact portrait of Martin Luther, of whom it may be truly said, there was in the man a great mixture both of good and of bad qualities : the bad predominated ; but he was abundantly more corrupt in his thoughts and sentiments, than in his life and manners. He was always reckoned to live sufficiently blameless while he remained in the monastery, and till he absolutely ruined all his good qualities by his heresies.”

Varillas, a celebrated French historian, in his diffuse history of various heresies, as he terms them, speaks of Luther in the following manner : “ This Augustine monk united in his single person all the good and all the bad qualities of the heresiarchs of his time. To the robustness, health, and industry of a German, nature seems here to have added the spirit and vivacity of an Italian. Nobody exceeded him in philosophy and scholastic theology ; nobody equalled him in the art of speaking. He

was a most perfect master of eloquence. He had completely discovered where lay the strength or the weakness of the human mind ; and accordingly he knew how to render his attacks successful. However various or discordant might be the passions of his audience, he could manage them to his own purposes ; for he presently saw the ground on which he stood ; and even if the subject was too difficult for much argument, he carried his point by popular illustration and the use of figures. In ordinary conversations, he displayed the same power over the affections, which he had so often demonstrated in the professor's chair and the pulpit. He rarely attempted to convince ; his method was to inflame men's passions, and afterwards gradually to insinuate his opinions. No man, either of his own time or since, spoke or wrote the German language, or understood its niceties, better than Luther. Often, when he had made his first impression by bold strokes of eloquence, or by a bewitching pleasantry of conversation, he completed his triumphs by the elegance of his German style. On the other hand, he was rude, satirical, ambitious, and ungrateful. Disposed to anger on the slightest occasions, and for the most part implacable. He was much addicted to excesses at the table, and was CAPABLE of the usual concomitant vices ; though his monastic life deprived him almost entirely of opportunities of indulging himself in them."

No remarks need be made on these descriptions of Luther by popish writers. The surmises and the exaggerations they contain are sufficiently obvious : the reader will easily separate them from the truth, and will, at the same time, perceive how much the account, which we have given of our reformer, is corroborated by these enemies of the reformation.

Moreri, in his *Historical Miscellany*, says of Luther, "This heresiarch gloried in his apostasy, and in the lamentable schism of the church ; and filled his writings with his poisons. He composed various works ; and it cannot be denied that he was a man of much learning and fire of genius. Vanity was his motive, whatever pains may have been taken to represent him as a person of integrity and moderation. Henry VIII., king of England, in answer to Luther, had sent to pope Leo a learned defence of the seven sacraments. Luther replied to the monarch in so insolent a manner, that it was easy to see

from this single instance, that a man of such a temper could not be under the influence of the Spirit of God. Besides, he published a seditious book against the bishops; and had the IMPUDENCE TO OPPOSE THE POPE'S BULL, in which he himself was excommunicated."

As my chief object in giving these extracts is to satisfy the reader, from the testimony of Luther's enemies, of his great learning and talents, I content myself with quoting briefly the substance of what has been repeatedly and distinctly conceded by the most noted Roman Catholic writers, in regard to these points; and I entirely omit many scandalous falsehoods, which have been invented by malicious advocates for the papal system, with the view of defaming the character of our reformer. His two blemishes have been mentioned above, as allowed by the incomparable Seckendorf, and these no judicious defender of protestants, or of protestantism, will ever undertake altogether to defend.

Those who wish to see a full account, and also a confutation, of the idle inventions and abominable falsehoods here alluded to, may consult, with advantage, the celebrated Historical and Critical Dictionary by Peter Bayle. This author, though justly esteemed an infidel in religion, was a man of brilliant parts and acute intellect; and he has collected together much useful information respecting Martin Luther, and both his friends and his adversaries.

"I," says this writer, "shall chiefly insist on the many falsehoods which have been published respecting Luther. No regard has been paid, in this point, to the rules of the art of slandering. And yet the authors of them have assumed all the confidence of those, who fully believe that the public will implicitly espouse their stories, be they ever so absurd. They accuse him of having confessed that he had struggled for ten years together with his conscience, and at last had become perfectly master of it, and fallen into atheism. They impudently maintain, that he denied the immortality of the soul. They charge him with having gross and carnal ideas of heaven, and with composing hymns in honour of drunkenness. Most of these calumnies are grounded upon some words in a certain book published by Luther's friends, to which his adversaries give a horrid meaning, and very different from this ecclesiastic's real thoughts. His greatest enemies could not deny that he had eminent qualities; and history

affords nothing more surprising than his exploits. For a simple monk to give so rude a shock to popery, is what we cannot sufficiently admire. He had made great progress in scholastic learning ; yet no one fell so foul upon the method of philosophizing at that time, nor was any man more vehemently bent against the great Aristotle."

The same author produces the following remarkable citation from a noted French writer, who was one of Luther's slanderers.* "Luther was a perfect atheist. His own disciple, Dr. Aurifaber, deposes, as an ear-witness, that he heard Luther himself say in the pulpit, he thanked God he felt no longer any disturbance of his conscience, and that he began to see the fruits of his gospel among his disciples." "Nam post revelatum evangelium meum," said he, "virtus est occisa, justitia oppressa, temperantia ligata, veritas lacerata, fides clauda, nequitia quotidiana, devotio pulsa, hæresis relicta." Mons. Garasse translates this passage thus: "I have fought with such success that I have stifled the seeds of virtue, oppressed justice, extinguished sobriety, rent truth to pieces, broken the pillars of faith, made villainy familiar, banished devotion, and introduced heresy." Upon which P. Bayle makes the following excellent observation: "There is no need to observe here, that all this is to be understood by the rule of contraries ; the thing speaks for itself ; and I am certain there is no honest man, whatever religion he is of, but will detest or pity the extravagance of such a slanderer." It is not at all improbable that Luther might use, in his pulpit, the very words here brought against him in accusation ; nor is it necessary to suppose that, in the warmth and haste of eloquence, and to make his meaning clear, he should even have used the words, *THEY SAID, OR, MINE ENEMIES CRIED OUT, &c.* Nothing can be more obvious than the sense of the citation, even as it stands. "After my way of expounding the gospel became known," says Luther,† *THEY SAID, OR, MINE ENEMIES CRIED OUT*, "Virtue is stifled, justice is oppressed," and so on ; and we are left to wonder how an omission, which is quite common in all vehement harangues, whatever be the language spoken, could possibly be made, by any reasonable

* Mons. Garasse.

† All becomes clear, by supposing the words here printed in capitals to have been implied, though not actually said ; or it was rhetorical irony, as 1 Cor. xv. 32, &c.

man, the occasion of so much calumny. Those, however, will wonder less who have been accustomed to observe, how frequently it happens in our times that sound and zealous preachers of the gospel are misrepresented and reviled, as though their interpretations of the nature of Christ's salvation had a tendency to promote licentiousness.

Let not the reader forget that my present object is to produce evidences of Luther's learning and talents from the mouths of his adversaries, or, at least, from the mouths of those who have shown no particular predilection for the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. It would be with much pain and reluctance that I should be compelled to place the famous Erasmus among either of these classes. His great learning, his elegant taste, and his acute understanding, are all unquestionable; neither is there any doubt how very serviceable his writings proved in preparing men's minds to approve the bolder and more decisive measures of Luther.* But still, in my judgment, the proofs of his love of ease, of fame, and of the esteem of persons of rank and consequence, are far more numerous than any examples which can be produced of his sincere regard for the essential doctrines of Christianity, or of the evangelical humility of his own mind. Though it may be extremely difficult to delineate accurately a character of this sort, his observations, nevertheless, on the great men and great transactions of his own times, cannot fail to be valuable. Moreover, as Erasmus at no time, I believe, was very fond of Luther, and as they very much opposed and controverted each other's opinions, the judgment of this illustrious scholar respecting the great Saxon reformer, may be laid before the reader in this place with much propriety. Indeed, the following extracts are the more important, and also suitable to be cited here, because, first, they decisively prove the abilities of Luther; and, secondly, they contain many facts and circumstances which demonstrate the knowledge, learning, and integrity of our reformer; and, lastly, they very materially corroborate the preceding account of the state of the religious world in general, when this extraordinary man began his opposition to the existing ecclesiastical tyranny.

Erasmus had so good an opinion of Luther's intentions

* See page 224 of this vol.

that in one of his epistles he expresses his belief, "That God had sent him to reform mankind."* Melancthon, in his Life of Luther, assures us from his own knowledge, that the elector of Saxony besought Erasmus in the very kindest manner, to tell him freely, whether he judged Luther to be mistaken, respecting the principal controversies in which he was then engaged; and that Erasmus on this occasion spoke out, "That Luther's sentiments were true, but that he wished to see more mildness in his manner." In another letter he says, "The cause of Luther is invidious, because he at once attacks the bellies of the monks and the diadem of the pope."† In various other letters, and particularly in one written to Cardinal Campegius in the year 1520, Erasmus opens his mind freely concerning Luther and his proceedings. He acknowledges that he possessed great natural talents; and that he had a genius particularly adapted to the explanation of difficult points of literature, and for rekindling the sparks of genuine evangelical doctrine, which were almost extinguished by the trifling subtilties of the schools. He adds that men of the very best character, of the soundest learning, and of the most religious principles, were much pleased with Luther's books; further, that in proportion as any person was remarkable for upright morals and gospel purity, he had the less objection to Luther's sentiments. "Besides," said he, "the life of the man is extolled, even by those who cannot bear his doctrines.—Some, indeed, in hatred to his person, condemn what is true, pervert and misinterpret what is right, and make him pass for a heretic, for saying the same things which they allow to have been pious and orthodox in Bernard and Austin." Erasmus declares, that he had endeavoured, to the utmost of his power, to hinder Luther from being oppressed by a faction of raging zealots. It grieved him that a man of such FINE PARTS should be rendered desperate by the mad cries and bellowings of the monks. "We ought," continued this sagacious writer, "to take notice of the source and spring of all this evil. The world was burdened with human inventions in the business of religion, loaded with the opinions and doctrines of the schools, and oppressed with the tyranny of the monks and begging friars. I do not condemn them all, but many of them are so mad, that

* Ep. Alberto pio. App. cccxxxiii.

† This letter is to the elector of Saxony.

for the sake of interest and rule, they hamper the consciences of men on purpose. They lay aside Christ and modesty, they preach nothing but their own innovations, and oftentimes scandalous doctrines. They speak of indulgences after such a manner, as is insupportable even to the laity. By these, and such like methods, the power of the gospel is dwindled to nothing; and it is to be feared, that matters becoming continually worse, the little spark of Christian piety by which the stifled spirit of charity might be rekindled, will be entirely quenched. The chief parts of religion are lost in ceremonies more than judaical. Good men lament and weep for these things; and even divines, who are not monks, acknowledge the truth of them, as also some of the monks in their private conversations. These things, I believe, first put Luther upon the dangerous work of opposing some of the most intolerable and shameless abuses. For what can we think otherwise of a person, who neither aims at worldly honour nor riches? I do not now consider the charges which they bring against the man; I speak only of the apparent grounds of their animosity towards him. Luther had the boldness to call in question the good of indulgences; but others had first spoken too much and too boldly for them. Luther has dared to speak indecently of the power of the pope of Rome; but others had first exalted it too indecently; and, in particular, three preaching friars, Alvarus, Sylvester, and the cardinal of St. Sixtus. He dared to despise the decrees of Thomas Aquinas; but the Dominicans had extolled them almost above the gospel. He dared to disclose some doubts in the matter of confession; but the monks continually perplexed the consciences of men upon that head. He dared to reject the conclusions of the schools in part; but others ascribed too much to them, and yet disagreed with them as well as he, altering them often, and introducing new notions in the place of those they abolished. It was matter of grief to pious minds, to hear almost nothing said in the schools of the doctrines of the gospel, and that, in the sermons, little mention was made of Christ, but much of papal power, and of the opinions of recent writers. Luther has written a great deal that savours more of imprudence than irreligion. But the greatest offence he has given is, his want of respect to Thomas Aquinas; his lessening of the profits of indulgences; his despising of the mendicant

friars ; his preferring of the gospel to the doctrines of the schools ; his opposing of the sophistries of disputants : all these are intolerable heresies.”*

The reader, in this last instance, has had before him a witness, perfectly competent to decide on many of the points, which, usually, afford matter for much controversy between papists and protestants ; and, we trust, the true character of the Saxon reformer, in regard to his motives, abilities, and learning is now fully ascertained.

CHAP. III.

THE PROGRESS OF THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING INDULGENCES, TILL THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONFERENCES BETWEEN LUTHER AND CAJETAN.

TETZEL, the Dominican, alarmed at the publication of Luther's theses, opposed to them one hundred and six propositions, in which he attempted to refute the arguments of the Augustine monk ; and not content with this, by virtue of his inquisitorial authority, he also directed Luther's compositions to be burnt. It appears from very authentic documents,† that this shameless monk was an experienced veteran in the traffic of indulgences. He himself, in the year 1507, that is, ten years before the present dispute with Luther, had collected at Friberg two thousand florins in the space of two days by the iniquitous sale of that article. The sale of indulgences, therefore, was no new thing in the papal system ; and the instance before us proves, that occasionally at least, the scandalous practice might be carried to a very great extent. It is, however, a relief to the indignant mind, to find that ecclesiastical history furnishes some few examples of pious Christians with enlightened understandings, who had bravely withstood the growing corruption. To mention one : John, bishop of Misnia, had effectually discharged from his own diocese the popish proclaimers of indulgences, who, like merchants, had been vending everywhere their certificates of pardon of sins, as if they were

* See. Erasm. Epis. and Brandt's History of the Reformation.

† Moller Cron. Fribergen.

an ordinary commodity.* He had blamed the people for foolishly putting their money into a chest, of which they had not the key; and had declared that, by reading the Bible, he had discovered the apostolical religion to be very different from that which prevailed at present. This good prelate, a little before his death, happening to hear that Tetzel was again employed in a similar way, prophesied he would be the last of the dealers in indulgences, on account of his shameless audacity.† Notwithstanding this, and every other warning or remonstrance, the Dominican commissioner persevered in the traffic with augmented industry; and so much incensed the minds of Luther's disciples at Wittemberg, that they ventured, by way of retaliation, to burn publicly his propositions, or theses,‡ as they were called, with every mark of disapprobation and ignominy. Luther was much grieved at this rash action; and finding himself accused of instigating his followers to commit it, he writes thus to a friend. "I

* Chytr. lib. ii.

† "A soul," said Tetzel in his Theses, "may go to heaven, in the very moment in which the money is cast into the chest. The man, who buys off his own sins by indulgences, merits more than he who gives alms to the poor, unless it be in extreme necessity." Other extraordinary assertions are likewise contained in his tracts, which demonstrate that Protestant writers have not misrepresented the controversy before us. Suffice it to mention two sentences more. "The ministers of the church do not barely declare men's sins forgiven, but do really pardon them by virtue of the sacraments, and by the power of the keys.—They may impose a punishment to be suffered AFTER DEATH: and it is better to send a penitent with a small penance into purgatory, than by refusing him absolution to send him into hell." Du Pin. b. ii. Seck. lib. i.

‡ When Tetzel was at Leipsic, and had scraped together a great deal of money from all ranks of people, a nobleman, who suspected the imposture, put this question to him, "Can you grant absolution for a sin which a man shall intend to commit in future?" "Yes," replied the shameless commissioner, "but on condition that the proper sum of money be actually paid down." The nobleman instantly produced the sum demanded; and in return, received a diploma sealed and signed by Tetzel, absolving him from the unexplained crime which he secretly intended to commit. Not long after, when Tetzel was about to leave Leipsic, the nobleman made inquiry respecting the road he would probably travel, waited for him in ambush at a convenient place, attacked and robbed him; then beat him soundly with a stick, sent him back again to Leipsic with his chest empty, and at parting said: "This is the fault I intended to commit, and for which I have your absolution."—This story may seem scarcely worthy of the dignity of history; but it is recorded by the cautious Seckendorf, and may serve to show the almost incredible lengths to which the popish agents proceeded in the detestable traffic so clearly laid open by this anecdote.

wonder, you could believe that I was the author of the deed. Think you that I am so destitute of common sense, as to stigmatize, in such a manner, a person in so high an office? I know better the rules of ecclesiastical subordination, and have more regard to my own character, both as a monk and as a theologian, than to act so." There were also persons, who pretending to be in possession of court intrigues, were fond of circulating the report, that Luther had published his theses by the secret instigations of the elector Frederic. Luther, with great concern, takes notice of this false surmise. In a letter to his friend Spalatinus he thus expresses his feelings: "I am heartily vexed at the scandalous report, which is diffused with much malignity, namely, that in all I do, I am only the **ENGINE** of our illustrious prince, for the purpose of disgracing the archbishop of Mentz. What do you think I ought to do on the occasion? Shall I open the matter to the elector? I am extremely concerned, that the prince should be suspected on my account, and I cannot bear the thought of being the origin of contention among persons of so great dignity."

"Luther also published a sermon, preached against indulgences, which Tetzel answered; and this produced a reply from Luther. About the same time, Henry duke of Brunswick, who was afterwards distinguished among the most active enemies of Lutheranism, appeared in the contest; and in a public writing accused Frederic of secretly supporting Luther. The well known character of the elector, for caution and prudence, seems however to have prevented the report from gaining much credit. This prince took extraordinary care not to involve himself unnecessarily in the concerns of Luther. Our intrepid reformer, in all his opposition to Tetzel, most certainly had no colleague or assistant; and he himself declared, that he never had conversed with the elector Frederic in his whole life.

Luther never did things by halves. Accordingly, as the affair of selling indulgences had laid firm hold of his mind, he could neither quiet his uneasiness, nor smother his indignation. He still continued to preach and write on the same subject, till the end of the year 1517. In the next year he went to Heidelberg, and was courteously received by Wolfgang, the brother of the elector palatine, who was the scholar of Ecolampadius, a name afterwards renowned

among the reformers. Luther had been advised by his friends not to go to Heidelberg, on account of the danger to which he might be exposed. But, as a general assembly of the Augustinian monks had been called at that place, he thought it right to obey his superiors, whatever might be the event. The official business of the assembly was of no great moment; and therefore we need not be surprised that the zealous and active spirit of Luther was not content with barely discharging the duties of his order. A providential opportunity was offered of propagating divine truth, and it behoved him not to neglect it. While, therefore, he remained at this place, he wrote some propositions, in which he opposed the prevailing notions* concerning justification, faith, and works. His capital object in them was to demonstrate the doctrine of justification, before God, by faith, and not by our works and deservings. The theses or positions which he intended to defend, were publicly exposed to view in writing, according to custom; and he called upon Leonard Bejar, a monk of the Augustinian order, to be his respondent. The professors of the university disapproved of the controversy; and therefore it was held in the Augustinian monastery. A large concourse of people attended, and a number of the learned bore a part in the disputation. Among the hearers were Martin Bucer and John Brennius, men afterwards eminent in the work of reformation. These and other persons, who in process of time became celebrated theologians, admired the acuteness, promptitude, and meekness of Luther, were struck with the truths of the gospel, which were new to their ears, and desired further instruction of him in private. This was the seed-time of the gospel in the palatinate; and these were the beginnings of the reformation in that electorate. Luther's disciples cultivated and taught the same doctrines in private, and after a time ventured to teach them publicly in the university.

While the cause of evangelical truth was thus making gradual advances in Germany, two celebrated Romanists, Eckius of Ingolstadt, and Prierias a Dominican, master of the sacred palace at Rome, took up their pens against the theses of Luther, who by these means was led into a fresh literary contest. Luther published elaborate

* Seckend. 29. from a MS. Hist. of the Palatine Churches, by Altlingius.

answers on all the disputed points; and managed this part of the controversy with so much moderation and gentleness, that his inimical historian, Maimbourg, has no way left of reviling the man he dislikes, but by saying, "On this occasion, he acted contrary to his natural disposition." Let the reader infer the real disposition of Luther from authenticated facts, and not from the insinuations of prejudiced papists. At this time, he wrote also to his own diocesan, and to his vicar-general. To his diocesan, the bishop of Brandenburg, he declared, that he did not DETERMINE, but DISPUTE, using the liberty allowed to scholastic men in all ages. "I fear not," says he, "bulls and menaces; it is the audaciousness and the ignorance of men that induce me to stand forth, though with much reluctance: were there not a weighty cause for it, no one, out of my own little sphere, should ever hear of me. If the cause I defend, be not the work of God, I would have nothing to do with it; let it perish. Let him alone have glory, to whom alone glory belongs." He endeavoured to arouse the spirit of his vicar-general, thus: "When I first heard you say, 'that true repentance begins with a love of righteousness and of God,' the words made a deep and durable impression on my heart, as if they had come by a voice directly from heaven." Hence, he said, he was filled with grief to see the true doctrine of repentance superseded by indulgences. He expressed his great unwillingness to be drawn into the contest; but, being defamed as an enemy of the pope, he felt himself constrained to defend his own character. He therefore begged Staupitius to transmit his trifling writings, as he calls them, to pope Leo X., that they might speak for him at Rome. "Not," says he, "that I would involve you in my dangers. I desire alone to stand the shock of the contest. Let Christ see to it, whether the cause be mine or his. To the kind admonitions of my friends, who would warn me of danger, my answer is, 'The poor man has no fears.' I protest, that property, reputation, and honours, shall all be of no estimation with me, compared with the defence of truth. I have only a frail body to lose, and that weighed down with constant fatigue. If, in obedience to God, I lose it through violence or fraud, what is the loss of a few hours of life? Sufficient for me is the lovely Redeemer and Advocate, my Lord Jesus Christ, to whose praise I will sing as long as I live."

In a private letter of this kind, written to a friend much older than himself, and whom he honoured as his father, every candid person must see that Luther would open the genuine feelings of his soul. This single fact, therefore, is decisive against the constant, but groundless, assertion of his adversaries, "that he was secretly encouraged and supported in this perilous contest by Staupitius." There is no doubt that both his diocesan and his vicar-general valued him extremely for his talents and piety; nor were either of them destitute of some evangelical light: the latter especially, as we have seen, had been serviceable the young Augustine monk in his early conflicts of temptation. But neither the former, nor the latter, had the knowledge, the courage, the faithfulness of Luther.

His controversial writings, published in the year 1518, in explanation and support of the various doctrines he had advanced, are full of important matter, and very much lay open the real state of his mind at that time. And these writings also, (such was his regard for ecclesiastical discipline,) he thought proper to transmit both to his ordinary and to his vicar-general. Among many other positions maintained in them, are the following: "That every true Christian may become a partaker of the grace of Christ without pontifical indulgences. A Christian," says he, "may glory that in Christ he has all things; that all the righteousness and merits of Christ are his own, by virtue of that spiritual union with him, which he has by faith: and, on the other hand, that all his sins are no longer his, but that Christ, through the same union, bears the burden of them. And this is the confidence of Christians, this is the refreshment of their consciences, that by faith our sins cease to be ours judicially, because they are laid on him the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

"I was compelled," continues Luther, "in my conscience to expose the scandalous sale of indulgences. I saw some seduced by them into mischievous errors, others tempted into an audacious profaneness. In a word, the proclaiming and selling of pardons proceeded to such an unbounded licentiousness, that the holy church and its authorities became subjects of open derision in the public taverns. There was no occasion to excite the hatred of mankind against priests to a greater degree. The avarice and profligacy of the clergy had, for many years past, kindled the indignation of the laity. Alas! they have not

a particle of respect or honour for the priesthood, except what solely arises from fear of punishment ; and I speak plainly, unless their dislike and their objections be attended to and moderated, not by mere power, but by substantial reasons and reformati^ons, all these evils will grow worse."

From these extracts * the reader will be enabled to form his own judgment of Luther, as a divine, as a statesman, and as an honest man. He wrote a letter to the pope himself, respecting the same transactions, in which he expresses himself in so dutiful and ceremonious a manner, and even in strains of such submissive and prostrate subjection, as sufficiently show, that at that time he was far from meditating a separation from the church of Rome. Maimbourg himself appears to have very much felt the force of Luther's ingenuous declarations and general conduct in these proceedings. He thinks, he probably might have been sincere in his professions of obedience to the Roman see, "because," says he, "it was so contrary to his nature to play the hypocrite for any considerable time together." The same author adds, "Whether he was really sincere or not, his modest and plausible manner of expressing his doubts, procured him the approbation of many. He was looked on as an honest inquirer after truth, who had detected the frauds of his adversaries, and, in that way, had unjustly brought upon himself the name of heretic."†

The preceding detail of facts and observations unavoidably lead the mind to this conclusion. Luther was far advanced in evangelical knowledge, and appears to have been an experienced Christian some time before he became known to the world. Yet was he still strongly wedded to the habits of superstition ; and he slowly admitted the conviction of the antichristian character of the hierarchy. He dreaded what he supposed was the sin of schism : and the impetuous fire of his temper was perpetually checked by the admonitions of conscience, and by the fear of offending his Maker. In this singular character, there was certainly united an assemblage of qualities, rarely

* The extracts here given are almost literal translations. But every one, who has been used to make extracts, knows that in many cases where a great deal is omitted for the sake of brevity, it is necessary to add a few words to prevent obscurities. This, however, should always be done with the greatest care, so as not to affect the sense.

† Maimb. p. 28. in Seck.

found together in the same person; in particular, the greatest caution in conduct with a temper remarkably ardent and choleric. Too often this last betrayed him into blamable asperity of language, yet seldom does it seem to have influenced his measures or plans of action. The poet's simple, but sublime description of one of his dramatic heroes,* "he feared God, and he feared none besides," is eminently true of the Saxon theologian.

Whoever keeps in view the natural and religious dispositions of Luther, while he contemplates the critical situation of this reformer, during the suspense of his contest with the papal authorities, cannot fail to conclude, that he must have experienced great anxiety and even perturbation of mind in that memorable season. The precise nature of his feelings will be best understood from his own account of them, in a preface to the edition of his *Theses*, which was published by himself many years after the termination of the dispute. "I permit," says he, "the publication of my Propositions against indulgences for this reason, that the greatness of the success may be attributed to God, and that I may not be exalted in mine own eyes. For, by these propositions † it will appear how weak and contemptible I was, and in how fluctuating a state of mind, when I began this business. I found myself involved in it alone, and, as it were, by surprise. And when it became impossible for me to retreat, I made many concessions to the pope; not, however, in many important points; but, certainly, at that time I adored him in earnest. In fact, how despised and wretched a monk was I then; more like a lifeless body than a human being! Whereas in regard to the pope, how great was his majesty! The potentates of the earth dreaded his nod. How distressed my heart was in that year, 1517, and the following; how submissive my mind was to the hierarchy, not feignedly but really; nay, how I was almost driven to despair, through the agitations of care, and fear, and doubt, which those secure spirits little know, who at this day insult the majesty of the pope with much pride and arrogance! But I, who then alone sustained the danger, was not so certain, not so confident. I was ignorant of many

* Racine, *Athaliah*.

† It is not necessary to enter into a detail of these propositions or theses, because the cause of indulgences, in the gross form then practised, has now no advocates in this country.

things, which now, by the grace of God, I understand. I disputed, and I was open to conviction. Not finding satisfaction in the books of theologians and canonists, I wished to consult the living members of the church itself. There were indeed some godly souls, who entirely approved my propositions, but I did not consider their authority as of weight with me in spiritual concerns. The popes, cardinals, bishops, and monks, were the objects of my confidence. I waited for divine instruction with such ardent and continued eagerness, and was so overloaded with cares, that I became almost stupid or distracted: I scarcely knew when I was asleep, or when awake. At length, after I became enabled to answer every objection that could be brought against me from the Scriptures, one difficulty still remained, and only one; namely, that the CHURCH ought to be obeyed. By the grace of Christ, I at last overcame this difficulty also. Most certainly I had formerly a much greater veneration for the Roman church than those have, who at this day, with a perverse spirit of opposition, extol popery so exceedingly against me."

Let us now listen to a few sentences of Luther, written so late as the year 1545, that is, about twenty-eight years after the beginning of the dispute concerning indulgences.* "Before all things, I entreat you, pious reader, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to read my writings with cool consideration, and even with much pity. I wish you to know, that when I began the affair of the indulgences at the very first, I was a monk, and a most insane papist. So intoxicated was I, and drenched in papal dogmas, that I would have been most ready at all times to murder, or assist others in murdering, any person, who should have uttered a syllable against the duty of obedience to the pope. I was a complete SAUL; and there are many such yet. There were, however, and are now, others, who appear to me to adhere to the pope on the principles of Epicurus; that is, for the sake of indulging their appetites; when secretly they even deride him, and are as cold as ice, if called upon to defend the papacy. I was never one of these: I was always a sincere believer; I was always earnest in defending the doctrines I professed; I went seriously to work, as one who had a horrible dread of the day of judgment, and who, from his inmost soul, was anxious for salvation.

* Latin preface to the first volume of Luther's works.

“ You will find, therefore, in my earlier writings with how much humility, on many occasions, I gave up very considerable points to the pope, which I now detest as blasphemous and abominable in the highest degree. This ERROR, my slanderers call INCONSISTENCY ; but you, pious reader, will have the kindness to make some allowance on account of the times and my inexperience. I stood absolutely alone at first ; and certainly I was very unlearned and very unfit to undertake matters of such vast importance. It was by accident, not willingly or by design, that I fell into these violent disputes : I call God to witness !

“ In the year 1517, when I was a young preacher, and dissuaded the people from purchasing indulgences, telling them they might employ their time much better than in listening to the greedy proclaimers of that scandalous article of sale, I felt assured I should have the pope on my side ; for he himself, in his public decrees, had condemned the excesses of his agents in that business.

“ My next step was to complain to my own ordinary, and also to the archbishop of Mentz ; but I knew not at that time, that half of the money went to this last-mentioned prelate, and the other half to the pope. The remonstrances of a low, mean, poor brother in Christ, had no weight. Thus despised, I published a brief account of the dispute, along with a sermon in the German language on the subject of indulgences ; and very soon after I published also explanations of my sentiments, in which, for the honour of the pope, I contended, that the indulgences were not entirely to be condemned, but that real works of charity were of FAR MORE CONSEQUENCE.

“ This was to set the world on fire, and disturb the whole order of the universe. At once and against me single, the whole popedom rose ! !”

It will be needless to proceed further with this extract : the account is in entire unison with the preceding one written many years before. The candid and ingenuous acknowledgments and declarations contained in each of them cannot fail to affect the reader's mind, particularly as they were all made by our reformer long after the transactions to which they relate, and at times when disguise and misrepresentation could serve no imaginable purpose. A more complete answer to the unwarrantable censures of those, who accuse Luther of selfish motives in promoting

the reformation, can scarcely be conceived. But after all, the best use to be made of the information here given is, to admire and adore the providence and grace of that God WHO IS WONDERFUL IN COUNSEL AND EXCELLENT IN WORKING.*

While the literary contest was carrying on between Luther and his antagonists, there were at Rome those who blamed the pope for not interesting himself in a controversy which, by exciting a spirit of resistance, and producing divisions, daily increased in magnitude and importance, and which, in its termination, might prove extremely injurious to the authority of the Romish church. With how much indifference and contempt Leo X. at first beheld the ecclesiastical disputes in Germany, how indolent was the disposition of this pontiff, and how improvident he showed himself as to defending the papal jurisdiction, all this appears in the strongest light from the absurd and careless answer which he is said to have given to Silvester Prierias,† when that zealous and learned Dominican showed him some of Luther's publications concerning indulgences. "BROTHER MARTIN," said he, "IS A MAN OF A VERY FINE GENIUS, and these squabbles are the mere effusions of monastic envy." Prierias, however, undertook the support of the pontifical authority; but, in writing against the reformer, he managed the Romish cause with so much heat and imprudence, that the pope himself presently directed him to be silent in future.‡ This writer, in the event, did much service to Lutheranism. In an affair which required the utmost delicacy he expressed his sentiments without the least caution or moderation; and exalted the pope's power even far beyond that of all general councils. Luther availed himself of the temerity of his adversary, and publicly exposed, with much severity, the odious doctrines which he had inculcated.

In the same year, 1518, a rash author of a similar description attacked Luther with all the virulence of an enraged and bigoted Roman catholic. This was Hogostratus, a German Dominican inquisitor, who represented the growing heresy as now become incurable by any of the milder methods. Penal and compulsory remedies, he

* Isaiah xxviii.

† Prierias was master of the sacred palace, and general of his order. He died of the plague in 1523.

‡ Erasmus, Epis.

said, were absolutely necessary; and he exhorted the pontiff, by means of the sword and fire, to deliver mankind from the detestable innovator.* Many of the monks† joined in this clamour with incessant vociferation among the people. Scarcely a word came from their mouths, except Heresy! Blasphemy! Schism! “I relate,” says Erasmus, “what I saw with my own eyes; and I am convinced that no one thing tended more to dispose the people in Luther’s favour than this imprudent conduct of the clergy. His propositions concerning the indulgences were soberly stated; and if THEY had but argued the points in dispute in the same cool way, these ruinous consequences would never have taken place.”

At length the Roman pontiff was roused from his state of indolence and security. Not only the avaricious venders of indulgences vociferated against Luther, as Demetrius and the silversmiths did against St. Paul, when their craft was in danger, but from all quarters complaints of the progress of heresy were sent to Rome. Even the emperor Maximilian I. represented to the pope how necessary his interference was become. The Augustine monk, he said, was disseminating heretical and destructive doctrines, was obstinate in adhering to his opinions, and active in propagating them; and he had made many converts, even among persons of rank and distinction.‡

The imprudence of Leo X. at this critical moment, may seem almost the consequence of judicial infatuation. At once he passed from the extremes of neglect and indifference to those of tyrannical violence and blind temerity. He ordered Luther to appear at Rome within sixty days, to answer for himself before certain judges, of whom his antagonist, Silvester Prierias, was appointed one. Our reformer took the wisest method to protect himself against the impending storm. He instantly sent an account of the pope’s citation to his friend Spalatinus, who was then with the elector Frederic at the diet of Augsburg; and, in the strongest terms, requested that, through the interposition of the prince, his cause might be heard in Germany and not at Rome. Frederic the Wise understood the arts and practice of the court of Rome, and was convinced of the propriety, and even the necessity of seconding Luther’s wishes. Accordingly he urged the

* Maimb. p. 38.

† Erasm. Epis.

‡ Maximilian’s Letter, Op. Luth. vol. i.

competency of a German tribunal in an ecclesiastical controversy of that nature; and it seems entirely owing to the address, the penetration, and the firmness of this great prince, that the Roman pontiff at last consented that cardinal Cajetan, who was then his legate at Augsburg, should take cognisance of the matter. If the delinquent showed proper marks of penitence and submission, he was to be kindly received again into the bosom of the church; but if he refused to appear before his appointed judge, the legate was commissioned then to denounce publicly, against him and his adherents, all the thunders and anathemas of papal indignation.*

Leo X. perceiving how great a favourite Luther was with the elector of Saxony, judged it expedient, by all the means in his power, to secure the support and concurrence of that prince in an affair, which he had now begun to consider as of the greatest moment. For this purpose he acquainted Frederic, in a polite and affectionate, but very artful epistle, of the measures which he had been compelled to adopt, through the disobedience of an Augustine monk, whose very "order and profession should have perpetually reminded him of the duties of humility and obsequiousness." He styles Luther a son of iniquity, a prevaricator, who boasts of the protection of the elector, but, in fact, reverences no superior whatever. I know, says the pope, he has no ground for representing you as one who encourages and supports him; nevertheless, I exhort you in the Lord, and as you would preserve the reputation and dignity of a good catholic prince, to be on your guard, lest the lustre of your highly honoured ancestors should be in any degree tarnished by this calumny. I know of no blame respecting you; but I would wish you to avoid the very suspicion of blame, in which the rashness of this man may involve you. He then proceeds: As many learned and religious persons, and in particular, our beloved son, Prierias, the master of our sacred palace, have informed us of the heretical proceedings of Martin Luther, we have ordered him to be called upon to answer for himself; and for this purpose we have given EXPLICIT DIRECTIONS to cardinal Cajetan, our legate. Lastly, he concludes with a strong exhortation and injunction, that Frederic, in virtue of the holy obedience which he owed to the Roman church, should contribute

* The pope's directions to Cajetan, Luther, Op. vol. i.

his utmost to secure the person of Luther, and deliver him up to the power of the holy see: he declared, however, at the same time, that if he were found innocent he should be dismissed in peace and in favour; and even if he was guilty, he would exercise clemency towards him largely upon repentance.*

It is well worthy of notice, that in this epistle the pope suppresses a very material fact, namely, that Luther had already, and without trial, been condemned at Rome as a heretic, by the bishop of Ascoli, the auditor of the apostolic chamber! This clearly appears from the pope's OWN BRIEF, which he sent to cardinal Cajetan along with the above-mentioned directions; and the poor persecuted monk, in his writings, makes several pertinent observations upon the occasion. "The pleasantest thing of all," says he, "is this: the pope's BRIEF is dated August the twenty-third. I was cited and admonished, on the seventh of August, to appear at Rome within sixty days. Thus it is very plain, that either before the citation was delivered to me, or at most within sixteen days after, the bishop of Ascoli proceeded against me, judged me, and pronounced me an incorrigible heretic. Suppose I should ask, What are become of the sixty days mentioned in the citation delivered to me, which are to be reckoned from the seventh of August, and would end about the seventh of October? Is it the usage of the pope's court to cite, admonish, accuse, judge, condemn, and pronounce sentence, all on the same day, and especially when the supposed culprit is at a considerable distance, and totally ignorant of the proceedings? Again, how can they charge me with having abused the pope's kindness, and with persevering obstinately in heresy? Would they be able to give any other answer to these questions than, that when they fabricated the falsehoods respecting me they had lost their memory, and stood in need of a few doses of hellebore."

The condemnation of Luther at Rome, previous to his examination before Cajetan, was so important a fact, and implied so much violence and animosity in Leo and his advisers, that it may well be doubted whether our reformer, intrepid as he was, if he had been acquainted with all the circumstances of his disgrace and danger, would have ventured to have appeared at all at Augsburg. It

* The pope's letter to the elector of Saxony, tom. i Witt. p. 204.

is clear, from one of his letters to Spalatinus,* that, on his return from that place, he first learnt at Nuremberg the nature and extent of the papal commission to the cardinal, namely, that, already being pronounced a pertinacious heretic, his person was to be secured and kept in safety till further orders for his removal to Rome.

The elector of Saxony conducted himself throughout this difficult transaction with the most extraordinary discretion. He was determined not to permit Luther to be sent to Rome, where he would be at the mercy of his enraged adversaries ; but, for the purpose of carrying this point the more easily, and also in the hope that an accommodation might take place with the Roman see, he promised the pope's legate that he would take effectual care to place the supposed heretic before him, for examination, at Augsburg. We have observed, indeed,† that it was part of the pope's instructions to Cajetan to show every kindness to Luther, provided he came voluntarily to confess his fault and sue for pardon ; but what was to be done in case he should refuse, which was the thing by far the more probable to happen? Luther himself in his account of this matter says, " Every thing, I doubt not, would have been settled, in the most peaceable and affectionate manner, if I would but have written down six letters, REVOCO (I RECANT)."

Frederic provided for the safety of his favourite, Luther, in the following manner: he gave him letters of recommendation to the senate and principal inhabitants of Augsburg ; who, instantly on his arrival, exhorted him not to appear before the cardinal till he had obtained a promise of safe-conduct from the emperor, who was then hunting at some distance from the city. Through the influence of these same persons, this important request of safe-conduct was granted ; and after three days the emperor's council announced to the cardinal, that the public faith was pledged to Luther, and therefore he must take no violent steps against him. The cardinal answered, " It is very well ; nevertheless I shall do my duty."

Luther informs us, that during those three days he was constantly pressed, by a very troublesome emissary of Cajetan, to recant. If I would but recant, he said, all would be right. He further relates a curious conversation

* Lib. i. Epist.

† Page 287

which took place between himself and this emissary. He came on the third day, and expostulated as follows :

Emissary. Why will you not go to the cardinal? he is waiting to receive you in the kindest manner.

Luther. I must listen to the advice of those excellent persons to whom I am recommended by the elector; and they tell me I must by no means go to him till I have obtained the public faith. The moment THAT is obtained I am ready to go.

E. What, (said he, evidently in much agitation,) do you think that prince Frederic will take up arms on your account?

L. It is very far from my wish.

E. Where do you mean to stay?

L. In the open air.

E. Pray, suppose you had the pope and his cardinals all in your power, what would you do with them?

L. I would treat them with the greatest respect and honour.

E. So;—said he, waving his hand in the Italian manner, and went away, and returned no more.

A short time before these transactions at Augsburg the celebrated Melancthon had been received as Greek professor at the university of Wittemberg, in the twenty-second year of his age. The lectures of this truly learned and good man, together with those of Luther, were attended by crowds of students; and the university of Leipsic, a city wholly under Roman influence, on account of the principles of its sovereign, George of Saxony, declined in its lustre. The consequence was, that Luther became still more odious to the hierarchy. Add to this, his defence of his theses, and a sermon against the abuses of officials in excommunications, just published, had exasperated his adversaries to the highest degree. We learn, from his letters to Staupitius and Spalatinus, what were the feelings and reflections of our hero at this alarming conjuncture. To the former he said, “Doubt not but I mean to be free in searching and handling the word of God. These citations and menaces move me not.” To the latter he writes thus: “From the bottom of my heart I wish not to involve the elector in my perils. There is but one thing which I hope he may be able to do for me,—namely, to prevent any violence on my person. And

if he cannot do even that conveniently, I would have all the danger to be my own.—What I have undertaken to defend, I trust I shall defend effectually. It may be found necessary to pay some regard to self-preservation, but a regard to truth is paramount to every consideration.” This is the language of one who was well instructed in Christian principles, and knew the practice of holy men in the purest times.

Certainly, at first, Luther seems to have doubted whether he should not be guilty of an unjustifiable temerity, in stirring a single step towards Augsburg, without the previous grant of a safe-conduct. But his scruples were done away by the generous behaviour of the elector. This excellent prince not only gave him the above-mentioned letters of recommendation, but also furnished him with money for his journey; informed him, by Spalatinus, that he might proceed to Augsburg, without need of a safe-conduct, such was the legate’s benevolent intentions towards him; and encouraged him to believe that, whatever might happen, he would not permit him to be dragged to the papal tribunal at Rome. It is most probable, however, that Frederic the Wise either foresaw the effect which his letters of recommendation would produce at Augsburg, or had otherwise secretly provided that the public faith should be engaged for the persecuted reformer. He was a prince, says Luther,* of incredible capacity and penetration, and was accustomed to take effectual measures for disconcerting the Romanists long before they entertained the least suspicion that he was aware of their designs. It was much against the inclination of Cajetan that the emperor Maximilian granted a safe-conduct on this occasion. That irritated legate wrote to Frederic, and in much anger informed him, that he had expressly told the imperial council he would not have the name of Cajetan mentioned in that part of the transaction.† He is usually called Cajetan, though his real name was Thomas de Vio, of the town of Cajeta. He is allowed by Luther himself to have been naturally a man of a benevolent temper. Yet the choosing of this cardinal for the purpose of reconciling matters must not be produced as an example of discretion in Leo X. Thomas de Vio was excessively superstitious, and also

* Luther, Op. vol. i.

† Epist. Cajet. ad Sax. duc. Father Paul, C. Trent, b. i.

entertained the most lofty ideas of papal authority. He wrote a book on the power of the Roman pontiff, which is said to have procured for him the archbishopric of Palermo and a cardinal's hat. Add to all this, he was a Dominican, and consequently the declared enemy of Luther and the friend of Tetzel. Such a person was ill fitted to sit as judge or arbitrator in this nice and perilous controversy.

At the first interview Luther prostrated himself before the cardinal, and was courteously received. But, at the same time, he was required to retract his errors, to avoid them in future, and to abstain from every thing which might disturb the peace of the church. And these three things were stated expressly to be the order of the most holy pope. Luther desired that he might be permitted to see the pope's BRIEF. But this request was peremptorily refused.

The heaviest charge against him seems to have been, that he had transgressed the bull of Clement VI., which had defined the nature and extent of indulgences; and it may easily be conceived with how much indignation the cardinal would hear the defence of Luther, namely, that the Holy Scriptures, which he could produce in support of his own doctrines, had abundantly more weight with him than a pontifical bull, which, in fact, proved nothing, but merely recited the opinion of Thomas Aquinas.—Cajetan, in answer, exalted the authority of the pope above all councils, above the church, and even above the Scriptures themselves. To this Luther opposed the appeal of the university of Paris, whose reputation had always stood high as the parent of science, and the defender of the purest Christianity. Cajetan, in a rage, declared that the Parisians would meet with due punish-

* This important circumstance is not taken notice of by the ecclesiastical historians; though I find Luther himself in his celebrated letter to the elector of Saxony, written after the conference with Cajetan, uses the words "nam exemplar BREVIS petenti denegabat Dominus legatus." It is easy enough to understand why the legate, who was affecting to treat Luther with the greatest kindness, should not choose to show him a BRIEF, in which it appeared that, at that very moment, he stood condemned as a heretic at Rome, though he had never been heard. On a view of all the circumstances, it seems by no means improbable that the cardinal, pursuant to his instructions, was intending to make the poor heretic a prisoner, notwithstanding the emperor's promise of safe-conduct. But a sight of the BRIEF could not have failed to alarm and put on his guard any man in so critical a situation.

ment; and that Gerson,* whose writings Luther had quoted, was DAMNED, together with all his followers. So extravagantly high were the ideas of papal power conceived by this cardinal, that even the very moderate contradiction, given in France to the pontiff, appeared in his eyes an unpardonable sin. Little did he then imagine how much more openly his magnificent lord and master was to be opposed within the short space of a few months.

Frowns and menaces were by no means adapted to intimidate the determined mind of the Saxon reformer. He continued to insist on the authority of Scripture. He owned he might have erred, but he thought it reasonable that his errors should be pointed out, on SCRIPTURAL grounds, before he should be required to retract.

When Luther found that not the smallest progress was made by conversation with the cardinal, and that all his fine promises of kind treatment amounted precisely to this, "you must either recant, or suffer punishment," he wisely determined to commit his answers to writing. In so doing, says he, the oppressed find comfort in two ways; in the first place, what is written may be submitted to the judgment of others; and in the second, one has a better opportunity of working upon the fears and the conscience of an arrogant despot, who would otherwise overpower one by his imperious language.†

Agreeably to this resolution, he appeared before the cardinal with a notary and witnesses, repeated his protestations of general obedience to the church, and his perfect readiness to recant any error of which he could be convicted. Cajetan replied with so much acrimony, that the accused monk had no opportunity of explaining or of vindicating his sentiments. He absolutely refused to dispute with Luther, either in public or in private; he would not even consent that a single word of his own answers should be put down in writing. He continued to press for a recantation.

Staupitius, who was present at the scene, and who hitherto had acted the part of a steady friend of Luther, rose up and entreated the legate to permit the accused to

* The reader will remember, that this celebrated chancellor of the university of Paris maintained, at the council of Constance, the superiority of a general council over the pope.

† Luther's Letter to Fred.

return his answers at length in writing. To which request he, with great difficulty, at last acceded.

At the next conference Luther exhibited his written explanation and defence, which the cardinal treated with the greatest contempt. He told him, he had filled his paper with passages of Scripture, which were irrelevant, and in general, that his answers were those of a perfect idiot. He condescended, however, to say, he would send them to Rome. Lastly, he ordered Luther to depart, and to come no more into his sight, unless he were disposed to recant.

Notwithstanding this rough treatment, it was Luther's firm opinion, that it would have given the cardinal great pleasure to hear him recant. It may be thought some confirmation of this sentiment, that in the evening of the very day in which this last conference took place, he sent for the vicar-general Staupitius, and desired him to persuade his young monk to retract. Staupitius promised to do his utmost. "You must answer his scriptural arguments," said Cajetan. Staupitius replied ingenuously, "That is above my power. I am his inferior both in capacity and in knowledge of the Scriptures."

Throughout this whole conference at Augsburg, cardinal Cajetan appears to have been conscious how ill qualified he was to enter the lists with Luther, as a disputant in theological questions. Indeed the doctrines of the gospel, as far as we can judge, gave him little concern. His anxiety was, how he might best insure obedience to the pontifical mandates. He inquired not whether these mandates were reasonable or repugnant to Scripture; it was sufficient for him to know that they were the dictates of a pope. The decretal of pope Clement VI., which he urged with so much heat and positiveness against Luther, in the dispute respecting indulgences, maintained, that "One drop of Christ's blood being sufficient to redeem the whole human race, the remaining quantity, that was shed in the garden and upon the cross, was left as a legacy to the church, to be A TREASURE FROM WHENCE INDULGENCES were to be drawn and administered by the Roman pontiffs."* The Augustine monk had, for some time past, been too much enlightened to digest such wild, superstitious inventions; and the man, who could call upon him, upon these grounds, to renounce his errors, was

* Maclaine in Mosheim, vol. ii. chap. ii.

not to be reasoned with. Still, it required extraordinary courage to deliver in a formal protest against the belief of tenets, which at that time were both established by the highest authority, and also supposed to have been dictated by an infallible judgment.

Some objections were made to Luther's ideas of justification by faith; but Cajetan did not scruple to confess, that if he would but have retracted his opposition to the indulgences, ALL OTHER differences might have been composed in an amicable manner; and that his opinions concerning the efficacy of faith in justification and in the sacrament, admitted of being modified and interpreted so as to be inoffensive. When Staupitius was informed of this circumstance, he expressed a wish, that the cardinal had avowed that sentiment in the presence of the notary and the witnesses; because then, said he, there would have been clear proof that, at Rome, MONEY was held in greater estimation than FAITH.

Luther, on the contrary, considered the scripture doctrine of justification by faith, as of infinite importance. He declared, "that he would rather retract every thing which he had said upon other subjects, than THAT, which he must adhere to with his dying breath. That in regard to indulgences, their intrinsic nature, whatever it might be, could not be altered by ostentatious praises and honours, but that if he gave up the article of justification by faith, he should, in fact, deny Jesus Christ himself. That, though the cardinal had promised to conduct the inquiry according to the Sacred Scriptures, and the rules of the Church, he had not produced a single text of Scripture against him, nor any one authority from the holy fathers. Lastly, That he was confident no answer could ever be given to the scriptural arguments and the authorities, which he had produced in support of the doctrine in question.* "Our peace," says he, "consists in coming to Christ in lively faith: if a man believe not the promise, he may practise confession to all the world, and he may be absolved a thousand thousand times even by the pope himself, but he will never obtain, on good grounds, a quiet conscience."†

It was on Friday the fourteenth of October, 1518, that Luther made his last appearance before the pope's legate. A report was spread, that notwithstanding the engagement of a safe-conduct, he was to be seized and confined in

* Epist. ad Fred.

† Resolut. de Indulg.

irons. He remained, however, at Augsburg till the succeeding Monday. He heard nothing from the cardinal. How great must have been his anxiety! On the Monday, by a letter couched in the most respectful terms, he begged pardon for any irreverent or unbecoming language towards the pontiff, which might have escaped him in the heat and hurry of the debate; he even promised to desist from treating the subject of indulgences any more, provided his antagonists were enjoined to observe a similar silence. But to retract his sentiment, or give up the truth, he absolutely refused. He said, his conscience would not permit him to act in that manner. He acknowledged that his friends, and especially his vicar-general, had taken great pains to make him think humbly, submit his own opinion, and form a right judgment: "But," said he, "neither the favour, nor the advice, nor the command of any man, ought ever to make me do or say what is contrary to my conscience." To this letter he received no answer.

On the next day he sent another letter to Cajetan, expressed in more spirited language and nearer to his usual strain. "He conceived he had done every thing which became an obedient son of the church. He had undertaken a long and dangerous journey; he was a man of a weak body, and had very little money to spend. He had laid the book, which contained his opinions, at the feet of his holiness the pope; he had appeared before his most reverend father the cardinal; and he was now waiting to be instructed how far he was right in his opinions, and how far wrong.—It could no longer serve any good purpose to spend his time there, and be a burden to his friends. He was really in want of money. Besides, the cardinal had told him *vivâ voce*, to come no more into his sight, unless he would recant; and," said Luther, "In my former letter I have distinctly pointed out all the recantation I can possibly make." He then signified his positive determination to leave the place; but not before he had formally appealed from the pope's legate, nay, from the pope himself, "ill informed, to the same most holy Leo X. that he might be better informed." In prosecuting this appeal he confessed that he acted rather from the judgment of some persons of distinction than from his own. If he had been left entirely to himself, he should have thought an appeal unnecessary in this case.

He wished to refer every thing to the determination of the church. What could he do more? He was not a contentious adversary, but a tractable scholar. Even the elector Frederic, he knew, would be better pleased with his appeal than his recantation. He therefore besought the cardinal to consider both his departure and his appeal as the effect of necessity and of the authority of his friends. They said, WHAT will you retract? Is YOUR retractation to be the rule of OUR FAITH? If any thing, which you have advanced, is to be condemned, let the church decide and do you obey. This reasoning, in his mind, was irresistible.

Luther waited four whole days, reckoning from the day of his dismissal by the cardinal; and still received no further orders. The suspense was extremely afflicting; and both he and his friends began to suspect that this TOTAL SILENCE portended violence to his person. To avoid being seized and imprisoned, he quitted Augsburg very early in the morning of the nineteenth* of October, 1518. A friendly senator ordered the gates of the city to be opened, and he mounted a horse, which Staupitius had procured for him. He had neither boots, nor spurs, nor sword; and was so fatigued with that day's journey, that when he descended from his horse, he was not able to stand, but fell down instantly among the straw in the stable.† He had, however, taken care before his departure, that every thing relative to his appeal should be done in a proper manner, and in the presence of a notary public.

Such was the conclusion of the conferences at Augsburg, in which the firmness and plain dealing of Luther were no less conspicuous than the unreasonable and imperious behaviour of the cardinal.

Whatever might be the cause of that SILENCE for several days, on the part of Cajetan, which our reformer and his friends beheld with so much just suspicion and jealousy; whether the legate still hoped to bring the affair to a happy

* Some historians say, this happened on the 20th of October, others on the 18th; but I think Luther's own account of the proceedings at Augsburg show that he must have left that city on the 19th. It is unnecessary to trouble the reader further respecting a matter of so little consequence.

† Tom. i. Altemb. p. 150.—Paul Sarpi says, what is not at all improbable, that Luther had John Huss's case in his head.

termination by the milder methods of influence and persuasion ; or whether his ambiguous conduct is best explained on the supposition that he was intending to seize the person of Luther, but did not dare to proceed to extremities, in defiance of the imperial grant of safe-conduct, without further orders from the Roman see ; on almost every imaginable view of his motives, it seems natural to conclude that he must have been much mortified at the sudden departure of Luther. He had neither punished the heretic, nor reduced him to submission. The court of Rome would probably be highly displeased when they heard of his escape ; and, in their disappointment, would be apt to forget the difficult circumstances under which the cardinal acted, and to attribute both the present and the consequent mischiefs to his bad management. In fact, as soon as the events at Augsburg were known at Rome, the pope's legate was blamed exceedingly for his severe and illiberal treatment of Luther, at the very moment, it was said, when he ought to have promised him great riches, a bishopric, or even a cardinal's hat.*

Cajetan, no doubt, understood the disposition of the court of Rome sufficiently to foresee how harsh a construction would be put upon his conduct in a business, which had terminated so unfavourably to their wishes and expectations. In the bitterness of his heart, he complained to the elector of Saxony, of Luther's insolent and insincere behaviour ; and even reproached his highness for supporting such a character. He said, that he had conversed for many hours privately with Staupitius, and one or two more learned friends, respecting this business ; that his object had been to preserve the dignity of the apostolic see, without disgracing BROTHER MARTIN ; and that when he had put matters into such a train, as to have reasonable hopes of the success of his plan, he had found himself completely deluded. Martin, his several associates, and his vicar-general, had suddenly disappeared. Martin indeed had written letters, in which he pretended to beg pardon, but he had not retracted one word of the scandalous language he had used. Lastly, Cajetan warned the prince to consider, how much he was bound in honour and conscience, either to send brother Martin to Rome, or to banish him from his dominions. As to himself, he said, he had washed his hands of so pestilential a business,

* Father Paul.

but his highness might be assured the cause would go on at Rome. It was too important to be passed over in silence ;* and he entreated him not to sully the glory of himself and his illustrious house for the sake of a paltry mendicant monk.

Every pious reader will lament the effect which these turbulent and contentious scenes produced upon the mind of the venerable Staupitius. It should seem, that partly an apprehension of danger, and partly his private conversation with cardinal Cajetan, influenced this good man to leave his friend, withdraw all further opposition to the popedom, and retire to Saltzburg. Our more determined and adventurous reformer did not hesitate to tell him, that “ he stuck fast between Christ and the pope.”† Let us hope, however, that this judgment of Luther was of the harsher sort ; and that, in passing it, sufficient allowances were not made for the different tempers and ages of men, and for inveterate habits.

Two reasons induce me to conclude with certainty, that Staupitius acted towards Luther with perfect faithfulness at Augsburg. First, it is beyond all dispute, that he affronted Cajetan by leaving that place suddenly and without taking leave ; which he would never have done, if he had betrayed his friend by dishonourably entering into any plans for seizing his person. Secondly, by way of encouraging the persecuted monk in his difficult circumstances, he used this language to him, “ Remember, my brother, you undertook this business in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Luther himself, three years afterwards, owned these precious words “ sunk deep into his mind.” The truth is, this reverend vicar-general was a man of a timid temper, and advanced in years ; also his views of the gospel were far from being bright or distinct ; and lastly, the prospect of peace with the hierarchy, at least at Wittemberg, was extremely gloomy.

Moreover, we cannot doubt that the pope’s legate, in his private conversation with Staupitius, would use both conciliatory and threatening language. Each would tend to shake the resolution of such a man. And besides the direct and immediate effect of that conversation on the mind of the timorous vicar-general, we may fairly trace some other important consequences to the same origin.

* Luth. Op. vol. i. The letter is dated Oct. 25, 1518.

† Lib. i. ep

While he was agitated with the discussion, and perhaps yielding to the legate's menaces and advice, he exhorted his less pliable monk to exhibit to his superiors some plainer marks of obedience and humility. The firm temper of Luther, which had resisted the imperious dictates of a haughty cardinal, instantly relented under the entreaties of a mild and affectionate friend. Hence that submissive letter, which our reformer wrote to Cajetan,* on Monday the seventeenth of October; and hence those apologies and concessions which are contained in it, to the very limit of what his conscience would permit. Probably no part of his own conduct, on a review of the proceedings at Augsburg, would afford him less satisfaction than this; and though Luther never reproached Staupitius for having recommended so extremely injudicious and suppliant a measure, yet the latter might possibly observe in the former some dissatisfaction on that account; and, at any rate, he could not fail to be convinced, from many circumstances, that his own disposition was not calculated like that of his friend, to encounter such difficulties and hazards as were likely to arise in a righteous and determined opposition to the popedom. These considerations may help further to explain, why it might not be disagreeable to Staupitius to remove from Wittemberg, and thereby avoid the dangerous fellowship and importunities of a man, who, in his opinion, was apt to be impetuous and turbulent in his public conduct.

But perhaps the circumstance which may be thought most unfavourable to the reputation of Staupitius, is that in the year 1523 we find him preferred to an abbacy at Saltzburg. Luther's affectionate regard and veneration for his vicar-general, restrained him from saying any thing harsh or severe on this occasion, but he could not dissemble his doubts and anxieties respecting the consequences of this preferment. We will conclude this chapter with two valuable extracts of his letters. The first is dated 1522, and is an answer to a letter received from Staupitius, at a time when Luther had heard an unfounded rumour, that his friend was actually made an abbot.

“The report of your being made an abbot is so general, that if I had not received your own letter in contradiction, I must have been compelled to believe it. It is, I suppose, in the same way that you receive UNTRUTHS concerning me.

May the providence of God attend you ! but, I confess, my plain understanding does not point out to me, how it can be advisable for you to accept an abbacy at this present time. I would not however interfere with your judgment. One thing I entreat you, by the bowels of Christ, not readily to believe those who calumniate me. In regard to what you inform me, that my doctrines are the delight of debauchees, and that many scandalous practices have been the consequences of my recent publications, I am neither afraid of such censorious representations, nor surprised to hear of them. Certainly I have laboured, and am labouring, that the pure word of God may be spread abroad without tumult. But you know that I am not master of events. My object has been to attack, by means of the written word, that system of impieties, which hath been introduced in opposition to sound doctrine. The abominations, my father, the abominations of the pope, with his whole kingdom, must be destroyed. And the Lord does this ‘without hand,’* by the word alone. The subject exceeds all human comprehension ; and therefore we need not wonder that great commotions, scandals, and even prodigies, should arise. Let not these things disturb you, my father. I cherish the best hopes. The counsel and the stretched-out arm of God is plain in this matter. Remember how my cause, from the very first, gave the highest offence to the world, and yet it hath continually prevailed, Satan feels his wound : hence he rages the more, and endeavours to throw all into confusion.”

The second letter, dated 1523, is addressed to the reverend abbot of St. Peter’s in Saltzburg.

“ Reverend father, Your silence is unkind. But though I cease to find favour in your eyes, I ought never to forget you, through whose means the light of the gospel first dawned in my heart. I must tell you the truth ; it would have been more agreeable to me, if you had not been appointed an abbot : but since it is so, let neither of us interfere with our respective rights of private judgment. Your best friends are sorry for your leaving us, but still much more sorry that you are so near the infamous cardinal Langius, and that you will be compelled to bear in silence all his outrageous behaviour. I shall wonder if you are not in danger of denying Christ We still hope the best of you, though your long silence disheartens us.

* Dan. viii. 25.

If you are become another man, which may Christ forbid ! I speak plainly, I shall throw away no more words, but have recourse to prayer, that God may be pleased to show mercy upon you, and us all. You observe, reverend father, how doubtfully I express myself. The reason is, your long silence leaves us ignorant of the disposition of your mind ; whereas you very well know our most secret thoughts and wishes. Permit me, however, to speak positively on one point,—We are confident, that we are not really objects of your contempt, even though you should dislike all our proceedings. I shall not cease to pray that you may be as much estranged from the popedom, as I am at this moment, and, indeed, as you were formerly. May the Lord hear me, and take you and us to himself.”

These letters may deserve the reader's diligent consideration. They throw light on the general character both of the writer and of his friend ; they intimate an evident progress of knowledge, in Luther's mind, respecting the nature of the papacy, which took place between the years 1518 and 1523 ; they manifest the strength of divine grace, which enabled him to withstand that threatening storm which alarmed Staupitius, and drove him into a dishonourable shelter : and, lastly, they compel the mind to entertain painful fears and conjectures respecting the perfect uprightness of the new abbot of Saltzburg, however we may be inclined to indulge cheerful hopes, that at the last day he will be found not to have gone the length of actually denying his Lord and Master.—Staupitius enjoyed his abbacy only for a very short time. He died in the year 1524.

CHAP. IV

THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUED.—THE ATTEMPTS OF MILTITZ
AND OF ECKIUS.

THE condition of Luther, after his return to Wittemberg, was peculiarly afflictive. He saw before him the total ruin of his worldly circumstances, the hardships of poverty and of exile, and the fear of a violent death from papal vengeance. He was not without hope of the protection of the elector, partly from the well-known justice and humanity of that prince's character, and partly from the

good offices of his secretary Spalatinus. Moreover, as yet, the interference of Frederic in the ecclesiastical controversy had not only been firm and discreet, but also as spirited and friendly as could reasonably be expected, in behalf of one who was looked on by the hierarchy as a turbulent and an abandoned heretic. Still, it behoved our reformer not to be over-confident in his expectations of future support. He had abundant cause to be thankful for the past exertions of his prince, which had been found so useful and effective; but trying times were coming on apace. Every day the contest grew more and more perilous. Luther himself had a single eye to the prosperity of the kingdom of Christ; but he could not be answerable for the zeal or the perseverance of others: he was well acquainted with the human heart; and he foresaw that political and secular concerns might clash with the interests of the gospel. He would not wonder if the love of many began to wax cold;* even his much esteemed friend Staupitius had already quitted Saxony; and, though the elector had hitherto manfully defended him against the tyrannical machinations of the court of Rome, it might well be doubted, whether the chief motives of this magnanimous conduct were a regard for the honour of God and the religion of Jesus.†

It was an excellent part of Luther's character, that in the most critical and difficult situations he could commit his cause to the God whom he served, with firm and entire reliance on HIS WILL; and at the same time be as active and indefatigable in using all prudential means, as

* Matt. xxiv. 12.

† Some account of the religious character of the elector is given already in this volume. Seckendorf doubts whether his principal reason for supporting Luther, who was then the public teacher of divinity and philosophy in the university of Wittemberg, might not be the ardent desire which that prince always showed for the prosperity of his favourite seminary of learning. Be this as it may, it is certain, that even before the conferences at Augsburg, in a letter to cardinal Raphael, he expressed himself with great caution respecting the DOCTRINES of Luther. "I have never," says he, "taken upon me to defend either the writings or the sermons of Dr. Martin L. and I proved the same, which I now assert, both to Cajetan the pope's legate, and to Miltitz his nuncio." Some authors consider this as a confession on the part of Frederic, that he had not so much as read a line of Luther's publications, or heard him deliver his sermons: others suppose that, in his concerns with the papal agents, he might dissemble his regard for the reformer, with a view of supporting him and his cause more effectually in the end. Luth. Op. Witt. vol. i. p. 228.

if the events depended solely on human exertions. In his present danger and perplexity, he cast his eyes on France, where formerly some opposition had been made to the fulness of papal domination; and where he hoped that he might profess and preach divine truth with greater security than in Germany. "Not," said he in a letter to Spalatinus, "that I care much on my own account; for, in fact, I am concerned that I should not be thought worthy to suffer for the truth; especially as by going to Augsburg I exposed myself to many dangers, and almost tempted God to bring evil upon me. It grieves me, however, to see the fair prospect of our rising seminary thus suddenly clouded, and the studies of the young men at Wittemberg, who are wonderfully zealous for the acquisition of sacred literature, blasted in the bud."—In another letter to the same friend, he said, "Every day I expect from Rome the arrival of the ecclesiastical anathemas; and I am, therefore, disposing my affairs in such a manner, that when those curses shall arrive, I may be ready, like Abraham, to depart, not knowing whither. Yet, in another sense, I do know whither I shall go, for God is every where. However, I leave you this farewell letter. See that you have the courage to read the letter of a man excommunicated and accursed!" In a third letter he declared he was ready either to go or stay. "Some friends," said he, "advise me to deliver myself up to the elector, who will protect me in some safe place, and at the same time inform the pope's legate, that my person is under confinement, and that I am ready to give answers to such questions as shall be proposed to me. I commit this plan to your prudence. I am in the hands of God and of my friends. It vexes me to think, that it should be so commonly believed, that the prince in secret supports me. This report, if any thing can, will drive me hence, that I may not involve him in my dangers. To be brief: while I remain here, my liberty, both of writing and of speaking, is very much restrained; whereas if I leave Germany, I will open my heart to the world, and offer up my life freely in the service of Christ."

Those who have most considered, how great a trial to a thoughtful mind, a state of suspense is in dangerous and critical seasons, will form the best judgment of Luther's situation towards the end of the year 1518. The foregoing extracts lay open his secret feelings and resolutions, at

the same time that they also exhibit his extraordinary faith, patience, and resignation.

In this conjuncture, the elector of Saxony signified his earnest wish that Luther would not leave Wittemberg.* This spirited resolution is to be ascribed, partly to the interference and supplication of the university of that place in behalf of their beloved professor, and partly to the imperious and threatening language of cardinal Cajetan. Frederic, with a calmness and dignity suitable to his character, declared that he could not expel Luther from Wittemberg, without doing much injury to his university, and further, that he should not consider him as a heretic till he had been heard and was convicted. Animated with this favourable determination of the prince, the professor of theology resolved to remain on the spot; and, in a discourse from the pulpit, he requested the people, in case his person should at length become the victim of papal severity, not to harbour the east ill-will against the pope or any human being whatever, but to commit the cause to God.

It will be proper to mention here, that besides the literary and controversial employments of the professor at Wittemberg, he had for some time discharged the office of pastor of the same town, as the substitute of Simon Heinsius, the ordinary minister, who then laboured under bodily infirmities; and thus this industrious reformer supported at once the character of a theological teacher and disputant, and also of a popular preacher and parochial clergyman.

Luther foreseeing the manner in which he should probably be treated at Rome, and desirous of anticipating the papal censures, of which he was in daily expectation, had recourse to the wise expedient of appealing formally to a general council. In the instrument of his appeal, he still professes obedience to the authority of the apostolic see; but as the pope was only a man, and, like other men, liable to err, and as St. Peter, the most holy of all his predecessors, had actually erred, he appealed to the next general council, which, when legally assembled, was a power superior to that of the pope, and could afford redress to the oppressed.

It soon appeared, that Luther was not mistaken in his conjectures respecting the intentions of the Romish court.

* Melch. Adam.

His appeal to a future council is dated November 28, 1518. But Leo X., without mentioning the name of Luther, on the 9th of November of the same year issued a bull, in which he confirmed the doctrine of indulgences in the most absolute manner. By this step, no less improvident than impious, he put it out of the power of the friends of the papacy to vindicate, or even to extenuate, its conduct. The grossest venality and contempt of true piety and salutary discipline had prevailed in Germany, through the sale of indulgences. To maintain the rectitude of the practice, without the least correction of excesses, at a time when the remembrance of the transactions was recent, prevented every attempt that might be made to reconcile Luther to the hierarchy. The providence of God was admirable in thus barring up his return to the church of Rome, while, as yet, he was far from being convinced of the totally antichristian state of the popedom.*

But the mercenary prostitution of indulgences had not been confined to Germany. In the summer of this same year 1518, Samson, a Franciscan of Milan, came to Zurich, to prosecute the scandalous traffic. There he was opposed by Huldric Zuinglius, afterwards the famous Swiss reformer.† In the month of September, Samson came to Zug, where a servant seeing the people press in crowds, addressed them: "Be not so importunate, I beseech you; let those enter first, who are furnished with money; care shall be taken afterwards of the poor."‡ At Bern the enormities exceeded, if possible, those which had been practised in Germany. When the sale of the indulgences was over, the agents of the pope declared that BAPTISMAL INNOCENCE was restored to all present, who should confess their sins, and thrice recite the Lord's prayer and the angelic salutation. Those also, who thrice went round the great church daily, repeating prayers, might free what souls they pleased from purgatory! Still grosser corruptions than these were practised. But the infatuation of the hierarchy was incurable. Evangelical light and liberty were fast advancing to the relief both of Germany and Switzerland, yet the rulers of the Romish church shut their eyes, and hardened their hearts. Scarcely roused

* Op. Luth. i. 217-232. Wit. Luther's first appeal was dated Oct. 16, 1518.

† Father Paul, b. i. p. 8.

‡ Page 60. Seckendorf-Hottinger.

from a state of shameful sloth and sensuality, they seem to have instantly fallen into the opposite extreme of blind presumption and impetuous rage. Pride, rashness, and a most tyrannical ambition, appeared in all their councils.

During the whole progress of the reformation, the pious reader has reason to admire the providential circumstances, which, both in succession and in concurrence, favoured the happy deliverance of the nations from papal captivity. We have just seen how the conduct of the haughty Cajetan tended to fix the mind of Frederic more steadily in the interests of the reformer; and this was a consequence which proved extremely influential upon the subsequent events. Immediately this wise prince solicited the emperor to exert all his authority at Rome, that the present ecclesiastical controversy might be settled in Germany by impartial judges. What would have been the ultimate effect of this prudent step, we are unable to say. Maximilian died in the beginning of the year 1519; and during the INTERREGNUM the prince elector, duke of Saxony, as vicar of the empire, possessed sufficient power to protect and cherish Lutheranism in its infancy. "The violent tempest," says Luther, "subsided by little and little; and the pontifical thunders of excommunication were gradually more and more despised."* The resolutions of Frederic were not a little confirmed by a letter which he received in the spring of 1519, from the learned Erasmus. Brevity does not permit me to present the reader with this elegant composition, in which the writer manages his subject with wonderful address, dexterity, and politeness. By the following answer, however, a judgment may be formed both of the matter contained in it, and also of the effect it produced on the mind of the prince.

"The elector, duke of Saxony, to Erasmus: It gives me the greatest satisfaction to be informed by you, that Lutheranism is not disapproved by the learned, and that the writings of doctor Martin are read with the greatest avidity. He is a person almost unanimously admired, at home and abroad, both for the integrity of his life and for his solid erudition. That he has remained hitherto in Saxony under our protection, is indeed owing rather to the just cause he defends, than to the man himself.—Nothing can be more contrary to our principles, than to suffer a man, who has deserved reward, to be oppressed

* Luth. Op. præf.

and punished: nor, with the help of Almighty God, will we ever allow an innocent person to become a victim to the selfish malice of the wicked."

The court of Rome, finding it impossible to stop the proceedings of Luther by mere authority and threatening, had now recourse to the arts of negotiation. The haughty pontiff had become sensible of his imprudence in having intrusted the management of the controversy to such a commissioner as Cajetan; but we shall soon see that still he had learnt no lessons of true wisdom and moderation from what happened at Augsburg. He condescended indeed to employ a person of a different stamp; one who, by his insinuating manners and gentle treatment of the reformer, raised considerable expectations of, at least, a temporary peace: but, happily for the reformation, this judicious and temperate policy was presently succeeded by measures most unaccountably imprudent and disgusting. This new legate was Charles Miltitz, a Saxon knight, who, as a lay character, might be supposed less under the dominion of party and prejudice than the Dominican cardinal, his predecessor. He was commissioned to present to the elector Frederic the golden consecrated ROSE;* and, if possible, to put an end to all the ecclesiastical disputes which had produced the rupture between Luther and the Roman see. Frederic had formerly solicited the favour of the ROSE with much earnestness; but on this occasion, he is said to have received it with a cool and almost contemptuous politeness; and in nowise could he be induced to change his measures respecting his favourite professor of Wittemberg.

Miltitz, thus foiled in his attempts to influence the mind of the prince elector, repaired to Leipsic, and there finding Tetzel, he twice rebuked him with the greatest severity before his own provincial,† on account of his iniquitous practices in the business of indulgences. It appears from Miltitz's own letters that, as he passed through Germany, he had obtained perfect intelligence of the frauds and private vices of Tetzel; and probably he was the more desirous of exposing them, because, by abandoning that audacious Dominican, he imagined he should at once gratify the advocates for reformation, and

* This used to be considered as a peculiar mark of the pope's favour and esteem.

† Seck. p. 62.

shelter the Roman pontiff from censure. With Luther himself the new legate had several conferences, which proved fruitless, as to the essential points : and the only effect of these negotiations in the former part of 1519, seems to have been, that the electors of Saxony and of Treves agreed to defer the complete examination of the matters in dispute to the first German diet of the new emperor Charles V. ; and that, in the mean time, Luther should write a submissive letter to the pope. To this our reformer readily consented, for he was by no means disposed to break with the pontiff ; and it is not improbable he would have continued an obedient subject of the Roman see all his days, if he might have been permitted, without molestation, to discharge the office of a faithful pastor of Christ. The learned translator of Mosheim* seems out of humour with him for having made “ weak submissions ” on this occasion ; and yet he owns that, “ properly speaking, there was no retractation of his former tenets, nor the smallest degree of respect shown to the infamous traffic of indulgences.” If so, every judicious protestant, though he may entirely agree with this excellent writer, that Luther’s “ views were not, as yet, very extensive, his former prejudices entirely dispelled, or his reforming principles steadily fixed,”† may, nevertheless, maintain that his submissive conduct at this time, taken with all the circumstances which accompanied it, indicated STRENGTH of mind, not weakness, and a spirit of discrimination rather than of blind acquiescence. We OUGHT NOT to judge of this great man by the feelings and habits of protestants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

His inimical historian, Maimbourg,‡ says, “ his letter to the pope was rather civil than humble, but it contained nothing to the purpose.” Let the reader judge from the following concise account of it whether Luther, according to the light which he then possessed, did not take effectual care not to entangle his conscience by any improper concessions.

He said, it was a great grief to him to find himself accused of want of respect to the church of Rome : that his design, in all he had done, was to maintain the honour of that church ; and that, as his writings were now spread

* Mosh. vol. ii. chap. ii. sect. ix.

† Ibid.

‡ Sect. 24.

throughout all Germany, he could not retract his assertions without dishonouring the said church: that the persons who really injured the holy see were the very preachers whom he had opposed: they disgraced their sacred office by the most absurd discourses, and by seeking only to gratify their avarice under the protection of his holiness. Lastly, he declared that he was ready to observe silence in future respecting indulgences, provided his adversaries would also forbear their provocations. In concluding, he solemnly protested, that all along he had aimed at nothing but to prevent the mother-church from being polluted by the vile imputation of avarice, and the people from being seduced by a false notion, that the indulgences were preferable to truly benevolent actions.*

Of his personal conferences with Miltitz, the following compressed account is extracted from his own letters, and from the Latin edition of his works. “Charles Miltitz saw me at Altenburg, and complained that I had united the whole world to myself, and drawn it aside from the pope; that he had discovered this at the inns as he travelled. ‘Martin,’ said he, ‘I took you for some solitary old theologian; whereas I find you a person in all the vigour of life. Then you are so much favoured by the popular opinion that I could not expect, with the help of twenty-five thousand soldiers, to force you with me to Rome.’ After this flattery, he entreated me to consult for pacific measures, and promised that he would endeavour that the pope should do the same. We supped together, and I was treated with the greatest courtesy. I conducted myself in such a manner as if I had not seen through these Italian arts.† I could only promise that I would do all which I could do, consistently with truth and a good conscience; that I also loved peace, and was driven into these broils by mere necessity. This Charles Miltitz was esteemed a frivolous character, and his advice was frivolous; nevertheless it is my judgment, that if the friends of the papacy and the pope himself had treated me in this manner at first, matters would never have come to so great a rupture. Instead of that, the pope condemned me unheard, and raged with his BULLS; and the crafty archbishop of Mentz became the dupe of his own cunning. All the blame is at his door; for his sole object in suppressing my doctrine was to save his own part of the

* Luth. Op. vol. i.—Du Pin, cent. 16.

† Italitates.

money, which should be collected by the indulgences. But now all the papal plans and attempts are to no purpose. The Lord hath awaked, and stands to judge the people; and though they slay us, they will not gain their point."

Luther was always distinguished by a spirit of respect and obedience towards his superiors, whether ecclesiastical or civil. In this negotiation with Miltitz, and also in his letter to the pope, we discern much of this spirit, joined to great tenderness of conscience, and an amiable sensibility of temper on account of the humane treatment he had received. We must keep in view that, as yet, he apprehended the papal power to have just foundations, however it might have been abused; we must also keep in view his own description of his feelings,* penned in moments of the greatest deliberation, and long after the turbulent scenes were passed; also the state of the rest of mankind in Christendom, and we shall acknowledge the Saxon reformer to have exhibited a rare example of courage and firmness in these memorable transactions. In proposing a compromise of silence on both sides in the affair of indulgences, he may be thought to have acted inconsistently with his former declarations, and to have conceded too much to the hierarchy; but the answer is, he had already manfully resisted the Roman see in that abominable traffic; and he began to hesitate how far it was HIS proper business to proceed further in a matter of that sort: in a word, his conscience was at present puzzled respecting the EXTENT of the obedience which he owed to the rulers whose authority he then allowed. Harassed with doubts, and perfectly aware of the danger that threatened him, he would have given the world for a sound and discreet counsellor: of the danger, he sought no partner: but, alas, his best and wisest friends, when pressed closely concerning the most critical and perilous part of the contest, absolutely stood aloof.† After long and diligent reflection on the best authenticated facts, and the peculiar situation of Luther, the very doubts which

* Pages 283, 284.

† After he had conferred with Miltitz, he wrote to his friend Spalatinus; and he also particularly entreated the elector Frederic, that, for the sake of Almighty God, he would use so much clemency towards him as freely to say what he wished him to do in the present circumstances. Seck. p. 63.

arose in his mind, appear to me, I confess, to imply both extraordinary integrity of principle, and great vigour of intellect.

But whatever were the secret motives of our reformer in making his concessions, Leo X. disdained to accept the submission, and open the door of reconciliation. The serious reader will not be displeased at my repeatedly drawing his attention to the kind providence of God, which appeared so remarkably in many particulars of the contest before us. While the Roman pontiff, rejecting counsels of peace, was listening to enraged bigots, greedy Dominicans, and ambitious cardinals, the inquisitive spirit of the humble professor of Wittemberg was enabled, by degrees, and by a constant study of the Scriptures, to acquire a practical conviction that the tyranny of the papal hierarchy was no longer to be endured. Luther's letter to the pope was written in the former part of 1519; and by his two letters to Staupitius, we have seen how much better he understood the true principles of the papal system in 1522 and 1523.* It was undoubtedly this gradual insight into the enormities of the popedom, which, co-operating with the infatuation of the pontifical advisers in their unaccountable aversion to healing and pacific measures, raised that general spirit of indignation, and of opposition to the established religion, which, at length, terminated in the blessed reformation.

While the pope's nuncio was negotiating a reconciliation in Germany, Tetzel, the wretched subaltern, whose scandalous conduct had so much disgraced his employers, met with the reward which frequently awaits the ministers of iniquity. He found himself deserted by all the world.

Miltitz, in particular, had treated him so roughly that this daring and boisterous instrument of papal avarice and extortion actually fell sick, wasted away, and at last died of a broken heart. A dreadful lesson! This unhappy man left the world, as far as appears, destitute of comfort in his own soul, after he had administered a false peace to thousands! It became necessary for those whom he had served to discard him, and he had no resources in his own conscience. The pontiff's displeasure is said to have affected him exceedingly; but we have no evidence that he searched the word of God in true penitence and

humility. A little before his death, Luther, hearing of his anguish of mind, and sympathizing with him in his distress, wrote to him in the most kind and consolatory strains, and begged him not to be distressed with the recollection of any thing that had passed between them.* If the letter had been extant, we should have found in it, I apprehend, instructions concerning repentance, and warm exhortations to lay hold of the promises of the gospel. If the French Romish historians, Maimbourg and Varillas, had been acquainted with this fact, they would hardly, one would think, have represented Luther as a man of a vindictive, implacable temper.†

About the middle of the year 1519 Erasmus wrote from Lovain an epistle to Luther, which proves with what caution and temper that great man had beheld the progress of the contest. He takes care not to appear a partisan of Luther; he speaks of him with a studied ambiguity; commends him, so far as he could consistently with his determined purpose, not to expose himself to trouble or rebuke, and recommends to him moderation and mildness in his proceedings. In this last point he certainly deserved the thanks of Luther. Let us remember, however, that timid and artful politicians were never employed, to any good purpose, in the service of Jesus Christ.

No man understood better than Erasmus the art of suggesting advice, in nice and difficult cases, without giving offence. The latter part of his letter to Luther runs thus: "In England you have persons of the greatest distinction who think highly of your writings. Here also you have advocates, and among them there is one most excellent character. For my part, I keep clear of all party, with a view to be of as much service as I can to the revival of literature. And I think one does more good by civility and moderation than by violence. In that way Christ has brought mankind under his government: in that way St. Paul abrogated the Jewish ritual. It is better to complain of those who abuse the authority of the pontiffs, than of the pontiffs themselves; and I would make the same remark respecting kings. We may argue as strongly as we can against notions that have long prevailed, but we should never contradict them positively.

* Luth. Op. Witt.

Maimb. in Seck. p. 18.—Varillas, in eod. p. 22.

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It is more effectual to treat acrimonious abuse with contempt than to confute it. On every occasion we should guard against arrogant and factious LANGUAGE; nothing can be more opposite to the spirit of Christianity. At the same time we should keep a strict watch over our MOTIVES. Anger, hatred, vain-glory, lay snares for us, even when we are most piously employed. I do not say these things to you by way of admonition, for you do observe the very rules here recommended. I mention them rather for the purpose of exhorting you to persevere in the same conduct always. Your commentaries on the Psalms please me exceedingly; and I hope they will do much good. The prior of the monastery at Antwerp says, he was formerly one of your scholars. He is a man of real primitive Christianity, and loves you most cordially. He is almost the only one who preaches Jesus Christ. The rest, in general, either aim at lucre, or treat the people with old wives' fables. May the Lord Jesus daily bestow upon you more plentifully HIS OWN SPIRIT, for the glory of his name and the public good! Farewell.*

There are many excellent observations interspersed throughout this composition. It is written in Latin, and is a good specimen of that elegant adroitness with which the accomplished author always conducted himself in affairs of peculiar delicacy, and of the anxiety with which, for a considerable time, he endeavoured to avoid giving offence to both parties.

It is a most painful and awful circumstance belonging to the history of Erasmus, that the longer he lives, the lower he sinks in the estimation of the Christian reader. It is in the beginning of the reformation, while he was exposing the scandalous practices of the indolent, debauched, avaricious clergy, that he appears to the greatest advantage. But when Luther and his associates began to preach boldly the gospel of Christ in its purity, Erasmus instantly shrunk back; and not only ceased to be a coadjutor of the reformers, but became gradually their peevish and disgusted adversary. With inconceivable address and management he steadily trode, as long as he could, his favourite middle path of pleasing both sides; but when the contention grew sharp, when the doctrines of grace were found to offend the great and the powerful,

and when persecution was at the door, the cautious evasive system was no longer practicable; Erasmus was called upon to decide; and there could be little doubt to which party a character of his stamp would incline.

When we divest ourselves of prejudice, and view Erasmus as the most elegant scholar of his age, admired and courted by princes, popes, and dignified ecclesiastics, we are compelled to admit that his temptation to support the established hierarchy was very great; and it is to be lamented that he had not a clearer and more affecting insight into the deceitfulness of the human heart. If he had really been taught and influenced by the Holy Spirit he would have understood more of men's natural alienation from God by the FALL, and have had a deeper practical sense of the evil of sin in his own case; he would then have felt weary and heavy laden; he would have sought more diligently for deliverance from internal guilt and misery; he would have been enabled to resist temptations of every sort, and particularly those which were most adapted to call forth the sins to which his heart was most disposed; and lastly, though he might still have differed from Luther in subordinate matters or modes of expression, he would have had the same general views of the nature of the redemption by Christ Jesus; and instead of raising captious objections against the doctrines of grace, and quarrelling with the man whom Providence had ordained to be the instrument of their revival, he would have applied those blessed healing truths to the distresses of his own conscience, and would have rejoiced in that "burning and shining light" which arose amidst the thick darkness of papal ignorance and superstition.

In one word; the different sentiments which these great men entertained of the leading doctrines of the gospel, was the real cause of their unhappy contention; every circumstance of which may be traced to this single source.

The account already given of Luther, with the particulars which are to follow, will contain ample materials to enable the reader to form a judgment both of the soundness of Luther's Christianity, and also of the earnestness with which he taught his doctrines. With intense study and fervent prayer he searches for light, and he attains it: faithful to his convictions, he speaks without disguise; he exerts every nerve in support of Christian truth and

Christian liberty; and as he is engaged in a contest which he considers as the cause of God, he is ever ready to hazard all that in this life is dear to man.

From the foregoing observations concerning Erasmus, the student of the history of the church of Christ will be led to expect FURTHER documents relative both to his religious sentiments, and to the part which he acted during the progress of the reformation. The facts which are at present before the reader, it must be owned, do not convict that cautious and artful disputant of any decided opposition to a change in the ecclesiastical system, or of any settled alienation of mind from the reformer. On the contrary, they must rather be considered, in the main, as favourable both to Luther and to his doctrines. Yet, enough has appeared already to raise considerable suspicions respecting the orthodoxy of the faith of Erasmus, and the honest simplicity and disinterestedness of his intentions.

As we proceed, we shall endeavour to throw light on these matters. At present, we conclude with the substance of a passage extracted from one of his little controversial tracts. The quotation, though but short, is of itself sufficiently characteristic to furnish satisfactory evidence that ERASMUS differed very materially from Luther in the spirit in which he received certain scriptural doctrines, and also as to his contest with the Roman hierarchy. It also shows how Erasmus trifled with his convictions, and acted against his own judgment and conscience.

“If,” says he, “I were called upon to suffer for the truth of the gospel, I should not refuse to die; but as yet I have no disposition to suffer death for Luther’s paradoxes. The present disputes are not concerning articles of faith; but whether the pope’s supremacy is of Christ’s appointment; whether the order of cardinals is a necessary part of the church; whether there is Christ’s authority for the practise of confession; whether freewill contributes to salvation; whether faith confers salvation;* . . . whether the mass can in any sense be called a sacrifice: on account of these points, which are the usual subjects of the scholastic contentions, I would neither endanger my own life, nor venture to take away the life of another. . . . During our endless quarrels, whether

* Conferat salutem.

any HUMAN WORKS should be denominated GOOD, the consequence is, we produce no good works. While we are contending whether faith alone without works confers salvation,* we neither reap the fruits of faith, nor the reward of good works. Besides, there are some things of such a nature, that, though they were ever so true, they ought not to be mentioned in the hearing of the populace; for example; That freewill is nothing but an unmeaning term; That ANY person may do the office of a priest, and has the power of remitting sins, and of consecrating the body of our Lord; That justification is by FAITH ALONE;† and that our works are of no use for that end. What can be the effect of throwing out such paradoxical doctrines as these before the vulgar, but schism and sedition?"‡

This language is so perfectly intelligible, that it cannot be necessary to add any remarks by way of elucidation. It is the striving of an unconverted heart against the convictions of an enlightened conscience.§

But it was not only the wary Erasmus and the timid Staupitius who shrunk from the dangerous contest with the hierarchy in which Luther was involved; even Spalatinus himself was not a little intimidated by the daring measures of his adventurous friend. Several of the elector's court also were alarmed in a similar way. And thus the Saxon reformer, whose righteous cause was eminently that of mankind in general, and who himself needed encouragement in his perils and anxieties, was called upon to rouse and animate the drooping minds of his best supporters, who began to waver, and complain that matters were carried too far. This departure from a steady and consistent conduct in his more enlightened adherents was, no doubt, a trial peculiarly severe and vexatious to Luther. Men expect from their enemies reproach, misrepresentation, calumny; they are prepared for these things; they even triumph in them, and are stirred up by them to defence and victory: it is when their friends become tame or treacherous, when they deceive or desert them in critical moments, that the firmest mind, acting on principles merely human, is apt to give way. Conscious

* Conferat salutem.

† Solâ fide conferri justitiam, opera nostra nihil ad rem facere.

‡ Erasm. Purg. ad exp. Hutten.

§ It is evident that the fault of Erasmus was not in the *head* but in the *heart*: he was *convinced* but remained *unconverted*.

of integrity and disinterestedness, and overcome with chagrin and disappointment, a man in such a case abandons altogether a dangerous conflict, where his solitary efforts, against a host of adversaries, will prove inevitably abortive. Not so, however, where the cause is that of true religion, and where the gospel of Christ has laid strong hold both of the understanding and the affections. We then look for the operation of other motives besides those of mere human nature. As we then serve a MASTER who MUST be obeyed, we have promises of help, directions for resignation, and grounds of comfort in the issue of ill success, such as belong to no worldly enterprises whatever.—The following extract of a letter to Spalatinus will illustrate these observations.

Luther to Spalatinus:—

“ Do not give way to fear too much, my dear Spalatinus; neither tease your mind by filling it with human imaginations. You know I must have perished long ago in my various struggles with the supporters of papal abominations, unless Christ had taken care of me and my concerns. Was there a single person who did not expect that my ruin would have taken place before this time? I assure you I suppress many things which, if I were elsewhere, I should freely publish, concerning the enormities of Rome. But you must never hope that I shall be free from persecution and danger, unless I were entirely to give up the cause of sound divinity. My friends, if they please, may suppose me beside myself; nevertheless, I say, if this contest be really of God it will not be ended till TRUTH effectually save itself by its own right hand; not by mine, nor by yours. From the very first I have been expecting matters to come to the situation in which they are at this moment. However, I always told you that I would quit the country if my residence in Saxony were attended with any danger to the prince.”

From this letter, which plainly implies a previous communication from Spalatinus, expressive of much apprehension and uneasiness, a judgment may be formed of the sentiments respecting Luther, which probably prevailed at the elector's court in the former part of the year 1519. Spalatinus resided with Frederic in the capacity both of secretary and domestic chaplain; and therefore would take no step of importance without the secret knowledge and approbation of that prince. Luther was perfectly

aware of this; and in his letter to his friend would, no doubt, consider the fears and anxieties which he was endeavouring to quiet, as in reality the fears and anxieties of the elector himself. Hence he wisely repeats his readiness at all times to quit Saxony, if his presence there should be judged injurious to the interests of the prince.

On this occasion, however, neither the elector of Saxony nor his court should be accused of downright insincerity. In the main, they certainly favoured the principles of Luther, and rejoiced in his success; but they disliked any material share of the HAZARD of the controversy. Hence they became cold, supine, and irresolute; and hence their communications, which ought to have furnished spirited counsel and encouragement, dwindled into prudential lessons of caution and remonstrance. Modern protestants should know the extreme disadvantages under which the great CHAMPION of Christian liberty laboured in the beginning of the reformation.

The immediate circumstance which seems to have given the alarm at this time* to the friends of Luther, was the bold declarations of this theologian, in his answers to the positions of Eckius, respecting the foundation of the pope's authority. He had written to Spalatinus very explicitly on this subject, but seems not completely to have satisfied his scruples. To call in question the origin of the power of the pope, was to tread on tender ground; the nations, as yet, secretly revered his majesty, and dreaded his vengeance; though, in regard to ecclesiastical abuses in general, they had indeed begun to open their eyes, and were receiving fresh light apace.

The name of Eckius, of Ingoldstadt, has already been mentioned among the adversaries of Luther. This able and learned doctor of divinity had formerly been the friend of our reformer; but a thirst of fame, and a prospect of worldly advantages, seduced him from the cause of TRUTH. The facts we have to produce indicate but too plainly the motives of Eckius. After his literary defeat in the affair of indulgences, he circulated thirteen propositions, all of them levelled against the heresies of Lutheranism. One of these propositions affirmed the grand article of a papist's faith, namely, "That the pontiffs are vicars of Christ, and the successors of St. Peter."† Luther had the

* Viz. about the middle of 1519.

† Propos. Ecc. Luth. Op. vol. i.

sagacity instantly to see through his design, and expressed himself to the following effect: "I never so much as touched upon this subject in any of my discourses. Eckius now brings it forward to serve several purposes. He thinks he shall hereby cast an odium upon me, and at the same time flatter the court of Rome to his own profit, and to the ruin of his brother Martin Luther."

It will here be proper to give a brief account of the famous disputation which was carried on publicly at Leipsic, for many days together, in the course of this year.

Eckius, relying on the brilliancy of his own talents and the popularity of his cause, earnestly sought for a public exhibition of theological skill; and, with this view, challenged Carolstadt, the colleague and adherent of Luther, and even Luther himself, to try their strength with him in a contest on the points in dispute. Carolstadt was a doctor of divinity, and archdeacon of Wittemberg, and is esteemed one of the first open defenders of Luther. The challenge was accepted; and George, duke of Saxony, uncle of the elector, offered the combatants his city of Leipsic as the scene of debate, with an engagement for their security, and a promise of every convenience. He was himself a strenuous Roman catholic, and he expected that great glory would accrue to the papal cause from the well-known abilities and attainments of Eckius. Luther obtained leave to be present at the contest as a spectator, but was expressly denied the grant of a safe-conduct, if he attempted to appear in the character of a disputant. The assembly was splendid, the expectations of mankind were strongly fixed; and it was vainly imagined that some decision would be made concerning the objects of contention.

The first subject of debate between Eckius and Carolstadt, respected the limits of nature and grace. The latter disputant defended the whole doctrine of Augustine concerning grace, which, Luther observes, Eckius did not oppose by argument, or with any real difference of sentiment, but only in mere words and in appearance. He granted that FREEWILL without grace could effect nothing but sin. "It avails then," continues Luther, "not to good but evil. Where then is its liberty? Moreover, every illiterate person, who hears the expression FREEWILL, naturally supposes that it implies man to be equally capable of good and evil; whence he will presume on his

own strength, and think that he can convert himself to God. Eckius knows very well the impiety of this notion, yet he supports and spreads it. I too admit that man's will is free in a certain sense; not because it is now in the same state as it was in Paradise, but because it was made free originally, and may, through God's grace, become so again."

Such were the sentiments of Luther on this important subject; and his ideas appear sufficiently in harmony with what the most evangelical persons, in all ages, have maintained. The whole controversy was carried on with much clamour and confusion; the Roman party prevailed in popularity at Leipsic; Eckius delivered what he had to say with prodigious animation, and is allowed to have far exceeded Carolstadt in energetic exertions of voice and action. Luther protests, in the most solemn manner, that as long as an appeal to books and written documents were admitted, his friend, Carolstadt, defended himself with a rich variety of apt and excellent quotations. "But," says he, "Eckius made a proposal, that all books should be laid aside, and the dispute go on without them; the multitude gave a shout of approbation; and then, I freely own, that Eckius, who had the better memory and a greater flow of words, supported his side of the question in a more plausible manner than his opponent."*

This disputation continued for six days;† during which time the superior eloquence and acuteness of Eckius seem to have afforded a temporary triumph to the enemies of the reformation. Flushed with success, and thirsting for glory, this champion of the papal system came to Luther at his lodgings, and with an air of confidence said, "I understand you will not dispute with me in public." "How can I dispute with you," said Luther, "when the duke George refuses me my request of a safe-conduct?" Eckius replied, "If I am not to combat you, I will spend no more time on Carolstadt. It was on your account that I came here. Suppose I could obtain the public faith for your safety, would you then meet me and try your strength?"‡ Luther consented; and very soon after, he had the duke's leave to take Carolstadt's place in the public debate.

This second theological conflict was carried on for ten

* Seck. 73.

† From June 27, 1519, to July 4.

‡ Melch. Ad.

days with uncommon ardour and without intermission. Among the articles of controversy were the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, the nature of repentance and remission of sins, and, particularly, the foundation of the supremacy of the Roman pontiffs. It was in this last article of the controversy that Eckius placed his chief strength and expectation of victory. His numerous audience in general, with the duke of Saxony at their head, favoured the papal cause. Long habits of ignorance, superstition, and prejudice, in religious matters, had established the Romish doctrines; and the few who ventured to inquire for reasons of their faith were deemed impious and accursed, and worthy of expulsion from the community.

Moreover, this question concerning the superiority of the Roman see was well contrived to promote the ambitious designs of Eckius in every way. Luther, it was foreseen, must either shun the main point in debate by disgraceful evasions; or, by a direct avowal of his doctrines, expose himself to the charge of open heresy. He must either yield the palm of eloquence and of theological skill to his crafty adversary, or he would inevitably furnish such decisive proofs of rebellion against the hierarchy as would ensure his own condemnation at the court of Rome. Thus the troublesome innovator was supposed to be entangled in an inextricable dilemma; while the prudent defender of the established religion, looking forward to nothing but conquest and glory, anticipated the praises and honours of the Roman pontiff. Luther, whom we have observed to have been fully sensible in how nice and critical a situation he was placed, was much hurt by the ungenerous conduct of Eckius in this business, and severely reproached him for it afterwards.

To the talents and the artifices of the popish advocate, the Saxon reformer, besides his superior abilities and more intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, opposed a good conscience, a firm determination to hazard every thing in the cause of TRUTH, and a confident expectation of the blessing of the Almighty. In particular, against Eckius's doctrine of the divine right of the popes, he advanced the following proposition: "All the proofs which can be produced to show that the church of Rome is superior to other churches, are taken out of the decretals of the popes themselves, made within these four hundred years; and

AGAINST this notion of supremacy, there are passages of the Holy Scriptures, approved histories for eleven hundred years, and the determinations of the council of Nice."

When Eckius contended that the expressions, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church," "And I will give unto thee the keys," evinced the supremacy of St. Peter and his successors; that this was the explanation given by the holy fathers, and that the contrary opinion was among the errors of Wickliff and John Huss; Luther in reply said, that he could produce more passages from the fathers in support of his own interpretation of the passages in question than Eckius could of his; but that he had no hesitation to add, that even if all the fathers, without exception, had understood the passages in that sense, he would confute them by the authority of St. Paul, and St. Peter himself, who say that Jesus Christ is the only foundation and corner-stone of his church. He further observed, that the words "Thou art Peter," . . . if construed strictly, must be confined to the person of Peter, and therefore the authority conveyed by them ceased when that apostle died; and that if their meaning was to be extended to the church and to Peter's successors, no reason could be given why ALL the apostles and ALL their successors should not be understood to be the successors of Peter. Lastly, he intimated that his adversary had been very unfortunate in appealing to the authority of Cyprian. "If," said Luther, "the learned doctor will agree to stand or fall by the authority of Cyprian, we shall quickly put an end to this controversy: for, in the first place, Cyprian never addresses Cornelius, the bishop of Rome, in any other manner than 'My dear brother;' and in the second, he expressly says that every bishop has a distinct jurisdiction of his own, and that bishops ought not to interfere with each other, but wait for the day of judgment by our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Eckius was so much struck with the reasonings of Luther, and especially with the neat and well digested order in which his materials were arranged, that he was compelled to acknowledge, before a splendid audience, the "qualifications and attainments of his reverend opponent." He even besought their illustrious and magnificent mightinesses to pardon himself, who was so much occupied with other concerns, if he should not be able to

produce such a mass of accurate testimonies as the learned doctor had laid before them. He came to Leipsic, he said, not to write books, but to dispute.

It will be unnecessary to trouble the protestant reader with a minute detail of a multitude of arguments, which were brought forward in this debate, with great warmth, eloquence, and dexterity, on both sides. We shall make a few concise observations on several of the controverted points, and also take notice of some instructive facts and circumstances which are connected with this famous disputation at Leipsic, and then dismiss the subject.

Though Luther judged it impious to maintain the DIVINE RIGHT of the pope in that strict sense, which makes him the successor of St. Peter and vicar of Christ, his extreme reverence for the Scriptures, and his tenderness of conscience, disposed him, as yet, to allow the superiority of the Roman see, but on different grounds. It could not be denied that the pontiffs had possessed a decided preeminence from age to age, and therefore he conceived it was his duty not to resist "the powers that be." This scriptural argument which, for a long time, appeared to his mind in itself unanswerable, was still further strengthened by two powerful reasons. First, the will of God, he thought, might be clearly collected from the facts, independent of Scripture. Unless it had been the will of God, the popes could never have attained so great and durable a dominion. Secondly, "The whole body of Christians," he said, "own themselves to be under the Roman pontiff: this universal consent is a consideration of the greatest weight: the unity of the church should be preserved in every thing that is not directly contrary to the word of God."*

Entirely agreeable to these sentiments is the declaration of Luther in one of his letters to Spalatinus, who, it should seem, had been directed by the elector of Saxony to admonish him most seriously, in all things to observe a reverential obedience towards the pope. "To separate myself," says he, "from the apostolical see of Rome is a thing that has never yet entered my mind."† However, his next letter to the same friend intimates a further insight into the essence of popery. "That I may be the better qualified," says he, "for the ensuing debate at Leipsic, I am turning over the decretals of the popes; and I would

* *Revolut. Lutheri.*

† *Ep. 99.*

whisper into your ear, that I begin to entertain doubts, whether the Roman pontiff be not the very Antichrist of the Scriptures, or his Messenger; so wretchedly corrupted by him, in the decretals, are the pure doctrines of Christ.* As long as this new sentiment remained crude and unsettled in the mind of Luther, it certainly behoved him not to act upon it; but it is not difficult to understand how the divulging of so important a secret to Spalatinus must have startled the elector Frederic and his court, who, as we have seen, were sufficiently alarmed with the liberties which had already been taken with the pontifical authority.

How different were the views and motives of the persons who took part in the affairs of religion, about the time of the public controversy at Leipsic, and some months before! Leo X. was indolent and ill advised; perfectly indifferent in regard to religion and piety; only anxious to advance the opulence, grandeur and dominion of the Roman see. His ostentatious champion Eckius, on the one hand, flattered and misled his lordly master, who pretended to be infallible; and, on the other, menaced and calumniated the Augustine monk, while in reality he was seeking only his own aggrandisement. Frederic the WISE, and some of his court, grieved for several of the reigning abuses, which were obvious and undeniable, but still remained in a wretched bondage, confirmed by long habits of superstitious submission. Though friendly to improvements in religion, they dreaded the rude hand of the Saxon reformer, and were in general too much disposed to bow to the majesty of the pope. Lastly, Luther was daily approaching, by firm but gradual advances, to that evangelical liberty, of which he became, under God, the principal reviver in Europe. Let these facts and observations be kept in mind, and they will help us to discover, what must have been the feelings of our reformer at Leipsic, while he was disputing with Eckius concerning the pope's supremacy. To have denied the DIVINE RIGHT of the pontifical jurisdiction, according to the fullest and most extended interpretation of the words, was sufficiently dangerous; but to have dropped the slightest insinuation that the bishop of Rome was actually the Antichrist of the New Testament, or that the

* Ep. p. 100.

Roman church was antichristian in principle, would probably have cost him his life.

The more thoroughly we examine the principles of Luther, the more exactly consistent do we find them with his practice, even in the most difficult circumstances. So, in the present instance, he seriously believed, that long possession and the consent of the faithful,* were solid arguments for the papal supremacy; but some rays of fresh light burst in upon the mind of the honest inquirer at the very time when he was arming for the combat at Leipsic. He was then in no condition either to confirm or to do away his new suspicions of the antichristian character of the popedom. What was to be done? He determined to dismiss those suspicions for the present, till he should have leisure to weigh them; and in the mean time he adhered to the only principle, by which, in his judgment, the duty of obedience to the existing hierarchy could be supported. He dared openly to assert, † that it was far better the Roman pontiffs should, with fear and trembling, see the foundation of their authority in the permission of God and the consent of their subjects, than that, under a notion of DIVINE RIGHT, they should feel themselves secure, depend upon force and terror, and by degrees exercise an odious tyranny.

This declaration, though it fell greatly short of the creed of a true Roman catholic, yet, by containing an actual acknowledgment of the pope's supremacy, manifested a spirit of obedience and reconciliation on the part of the reformer. Nor was it possible for him, without doing the utmost violence to his conscience, to exhibit a nearer consent to the doctrines of Eckius. There is even some reason to believe, that if his friends, namely, the elector of Saxony and his court, had not discovered so excessive an anxiety lest he should offend the pope by disrespectful treatment, he would have conceded less at this time to his opponent, respecting the grand article of Roman catholic doctrine; or, at least, would have acted with more reserve on a point where his own faith, though modified and less offensive, was certainly beginning to waver. Before the public disputation at Leipsic, Luther printed and circulated his sentiments on the pope's supremacy, the same in substance as is related in the preceding pages. He took that step, he tells us, because he had

* Auth. Op. Resol.

† Resolut. de potest. Papæ.

great doubts, whether he should be allowed to enter the lists with Eckius as a public disputant. Three times by letters, he says, he put the question to the duke George, but could obtain no answer.* All this is, no doubt, strictly true. Yet WHENCE, it is asked, arose the solicitude of Luther to appear, at all and on any principles, as the public defender of pontifical authority; the public defender of an unscriptural opinion, which he was soon going to abandon with abhorrence and detestation; and which, in his private letters, he was already beginning to reprobate in very significant language?

Seckendorf ascribes these conciliatory measures entirely to the fears and remonstrances of the elector Frederic and his court; and thinks that Luther in this instance acted contrary both to his own judgment and his inclination.† To differ from this very judicious and candid memorialist can never be pleasant, and will, in general, be found unsafe: nevertheless, I cannot but think that, in estimating the motives of the Saxon reformer, his friends as well as his adversaries have, on this and several other occasions, too much overlooked his profound veneration for established authorities. They seem to have scarcely supposed it possible, that a man, who was so deeply concerned in the confusions and divisions of the church, should still have been a friend to peace and good order. Whereas in fact, Luther's spirit of submission to legal establishments is as unquestionable, as his courage and resolution in defending Christian liberty is truly wonderful and unparalleled. A proper attention to this part of his character will lead the candid inquirer to satisfactory explanations of his conduct in some cases where he has been too hastily accused of inconsistency.

Luther's own description of his feelings respecting the matters in dispute between Eckius and himself ought not to be omitted here; as it will, doubtless, be preferred to any conjectures either of Roman Catholics or of Protestants; especially by those who have observed the integrity and the precision with which this faithful servant of God always lays open his mind on serious occasions. "My own case," says he, "is a notable example of the difficulty with which a man emerges from erroneous notions of long standing. How true is the proverb, Custom is a second

nature! How true is that saying of Augustine, *Habit, if not resisted, becomes necessity!* I, who, both publicly and privately, had taught divinity with the greatest diligence for seven years, insomuch that I retained in my memory almost every word of my lectures, was in fact at that time only just initiated into the knowledge and faith of Christ; I had only just learnt that a man must be justified and saved, not by works, but by the faith of Christ: and, lastly, in regard to pontifical authority, though I publicly maintained that the pope was not the head of the church by a *DIVINE RIGHT*, yet I stumbled at the very next step, namely, that the whole papal system was a Satanic invention. This I did not see, but contended obstinately for the pope's *RIGHT, FOUNDED ON HUMAN REASONS*; so thoroughly deluded was I, by the example of others, by the title of *HOLY CHURCH*, and by my own habits. Hence I have learnt to have more candour for bigotted papists, especially if they are not much acquainted with sacred or perhaps even with profane history.*

The victory in the theological contest at Leipsic, as might have been expected, was claimed by both sides. But, instead of repeating many contradictory and positive assertions, that have originated in prejudice and party zeal, it will be better to mention several undeniable facts, which may assist the judgment in discovering what were the real sentiments of mankind at the time of this transaction, so celebrated in ecclesiastical history.

1. George, the duke of Saxony, who on all occasions was warmly attached to the papal interests, invited the disputants, after the debate was finished, to a convivial entertainment, and treated them with the greatest liberality and condescension. During dinner he laid his hands on the shoulders of Luther and Eckius, and, gently stroking them, said, "Whether the pope exists by *DIVINE* or by *HUMAN RIGHT*, HE IS, however, THE POPE." "This prince," said Luther, "would never have made this observation, if he had not felt the force of my arguments."†

2. Luther complains bitterly of the uncivil treatment which he met with in general from the inhabitants and the university of Leipsic; and, he observes, on the contrary, what kindness and honours they heaped upon his adversary, Eckius. Yet, notwithstanding both their aversion to

* Luth. Op. vol. i. præf.

† Luth. Op. vol. i. Melch. Adam. Seck. p. 74.

the reformer, and their attachment to the popedom, Hoffman, who was at that time rector of the university, and who had been appointed judge of the arguments alleged on both sides, refused to declare to whom the victory belonged; so that the decision was left to the universities of Erfurt and Paris.* The former of these, in spite of the importunate solicitations of George the duke of Saxony, remained perfectly silent; the latter, also, gave no judgment concerning the controversy at Leipsic, though, some time afterwards,† contrary to the favourable hopes which Luther had conceived of that learned body, they censured, as heretical, several of his positions or theses, collected from his various writings.

3. The Romish advocate Maimbourg allows, “that both the disputants displayed much ingenuity and erudition during their combat in the castle of Leipsic, but with this difference; that THE TRUTH, defended by a man of sound principles, like Eckius, vanquished error, though supported with all the knowledge and subtlety of a fine genius.” This testimony of an inimical historian, proves the celebrity of the talents of Luther. But the FACT of which I would here particularly take notice, is, the undeniable consequence which the exertion of those talents, in vehement and subtle disputation for ten days together, produced on the mind of Eckius. His bitterness and enmity against his opponent is well known to have suddenly increased, from this period, beyond all bounds. The sequel of our narrative will show, with how much personal malice and resentment he sought the destruction of the Saxon reformer, and also how mischievous his rash counsels proved to the interests of the Roman see. The reader will then judge for himself, whether the furious conduct of the papal champion is best explained, on the supposition of his consciousness of superiority and of victory in the affairs at Leipsic, or a revengeful sense of the humiliation and defeat which he suffered in that memorable contest. ‡

It was in an accurate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and with ecclesiastical history, that Luther more particularly manifested his superiority over Eckius. Very full and exact documents are in existence, both of what was said and what was written in the disputation;

* Mosheim, vol. ii.

† Not till the year 1521.

‡ Mosheim, vol. ii. chap. ii. sect. x. and Maclaine's note.

and no well-informed Roman catholic will deny this to be a fair statement of the case. But, notwithstanding the increased reputation with which the German theologian departed from the scene of controversy, it was easy to foresee, that the court of Rome would now be more incensed against him than ever. He had indeed almost agreed with his adversary on some of the disputed points; he had even defended the authority of the Roman see, by placing it on the best foundation in his power; in short, he had exhibited a spirit of fidelity, moderation and obedience; but all this could not expiate the unpardonable offence of searching the sacred oracles for himself, of confuting the papal pretensions to Divine appointment and infallibility, and what was deemed, perhaps, if not the most heinous, the most dangerous crime of all, of resisting and exposing the flagitious practices of the inferior agents and instruments of ecclesiastical rapine and tyranny. The man, who had proceeded to such extremities, was not to be managed by mild and gentle admonitions; neither was he to be gained over by bribes and flattery; he was an enemy of the holy church, and justly merited all she could inflict in her utmost fury and indignation.

Moreover, popery was not a religion which betrayed only occasional defects and errors: it had long been a SYSTEM of corruption; all the parts of which were thoroughly connected with each other, and conspired together, to deceive, defraud, and domineer over mankind. The members of the system sympathized with their head in a remarkable manner: they saw their very existence in its safety; and flew to its defence on the slightest appearance of danger. In return, the sovereign head of this vast body superintended the respective interests of all the members with exquisite care, and even with paternal solicitude. If, in some instances, the conduct of the Roman pontiffs does not exactly accord with this representation, the deviation will be found to have arisen, never from a relaxation or a change of principle, but from pride, contempt, indolence, and a sense of security. This was the case, we have seen, with Leo X. in the very early stages of Lutheranism.

Striking examples of this reciprocal sort of sensibility and mutual protection were furnished, in the latter part of this year, 1519, by the two universities of Louvain and Cologne, and the cardinal de Tortosa. There can be no

doubt that this dignified ecclesiastic, who himself afterwards succeeded Leo X. in the pontificate, acted, in all he did, by the direction of the court of Rome. Accordingly we find one of his letters, addressed to the principal academies of Louvain, full of hard terms against Luther and his writings, at the same time containing stimulating exhortations and admonitions, to induce them to give a public testimony of their disapprobation of such mischievous heresies. The divines of Louvain appear to have been of themselves sufficiently disposed to this measure, and even to have consulted the cardinal respecting its propriety. He commended their faithful zeal; and the result of this mutual communication was a public decree of the rulers of the university, in which they condemned many of Luther's propositions and doctrines, and pronounced them false, scandalous, and heretical. These warm advocates for the established faith did not stop here. They sent one of Martin Luther's books to the divines of Cologne, and requested them to censure its heretical contents in a public manner. These presently pronounced it full of errors and heresies; directed it to be suppressed; and declared, that it ought to be burnt, and the author of it obliged to make a public recantation.* Thus, by management of this sort, the friends of the papacy, very soon after their defeat and disgrace at Leipsic, obtained the sanction of two universities in favour of the reigning corruptions; while those learned seminaries, on their part, failed not to secure to themselves the approbation and applause of the Roman see.

It would be a useless employment to detail the particulars of what passed at the conferences at Leipsic, respecting several Romish doctrines, which in our times give not the smallest concern to any intelligent Protestant.

On the superstitious notion of PURGATORY, many arguments and distinctions were produced on both sides. In general, Luther admitted his firm belief of the existence of such a place, and even that some obscure hints of it were to be found in Scripture. But he denied that any thing clear and convincing was revealed in any part of the sacred writings, concerning this doctrine.† As the researches of this great man grew deeper, he gradually doubted of several points, which he then held sacred; and, in process of time, he dismissed them from his creed

* Vol. ii. Luth. Op. Witt.

† Disput. Leip.

entirely. The Roman catholic sentiment, of the number of the sacraments, and of the communion under **ONE KIND**, might be adduced as proofs of this.

It was not by accident that Eckius brought forward several propositions concerning the nature of **INDULGENCES**. This was the grand question which had produced all the present dissensions in the church. It was closely connected with every inquiry that related to pontifical authority: it was, in **PRACTICE**, the exercise of a very material part of that power, which, in **THEORY**, was pretended to originate in a divine right. To entangle, therefore, or crush the reformer on this point, in a public debate and before a splendid audience, would furnish such a proof of zeal for the faith, of ability to defend it, and of obedience to the hierarchy, as would infallibly ensure every reward which ambition could wish for, or which gratitude could bestow.

Luther extricated himself from the difficulty in which his artful adversary had placed him with a success which, before the conflict, he had not ventured to expect. Eckius happened to affirm, that a sort of medium of opinion ought to be held with respect to indulgences; "On the one hand, they ought not to be condemned, and, on the other, they should not be entirely **RELIED ON**." To the same effect he taught the people in the most public manner. In fact, he seems not to have foreseen, how great an advantage he gave his adversary by this unwary concession. "I had supposed," says Luther, "that this affair of the indulgences would be by far the most difficult point that I should have to manage, and that our disputation would have turned chiefly upon it; whereas it created little or no trouble. I found I could nearly agree to Eckius's explanation. Never on any occasion did papal indulgences receive a more wretched and unfortunate support. They were treated in a way that almost produced laughter. If the proclaimers of the indulgences had held the same doctrine at the time of vending them, the **NAME OF LUTHER** would probably have remained unknown. I say, if the people had been informed that the diplomas of indulgence were not to be **RELIED ON**, these imaginary pardons would have lost all their reputation, and the commissioners, who conducted the sale of them, would have died of hunger."—The acuteness of Luther, as a theological disputant, ready to avail himself of the smallest

indiscretion of his adversary, appears very manifest from this instance.

His heart, however, was not in these noisy and contentious scenes. The instruction of youth in divinity, and preaching of the gospel of Christ, he considered as his proper business. He used to lament the peculiar infelicity of the age, by which he was obliged to waste in controversy so many hours, that might have been far better employed in guiding souls into the way of salvation. "How long," cried he, "am I to spend my time and strength in frivolous discussions about indulgences and pontifical authority,—subjects, which have not the remotest tendency to benefit the church, or promote practical godliness."*

That some good might result from the contentions at Leipsic, and that mankind might be less bewildered in the mazes of subtle disputation, this diligent servant of God determined to review carefully all his own positions, which had been the subject of debate in his conference with Eckius, and to publish them with concise explanations, and with arguments in their support, consisting of appeals to Scripture and ecclesiastical history. These positions, or, as they were sometimes called, theses or conclusions, amounted in number to thirteen, and related chiefly to Roman catholic peculiarities. Several of them, however, gave the author occasion to state and studiously illustrate the scriptural doctrine of GRACE, and the nature of in-dwelling † sin, as described by St. Paul in the seventh chapter to the Romans. "In fallen man," he observes, "there remains an internal principle of evil, even after he is renewed by the grace of God. Every Christian needs daily repentance, because he sins daily; not indeed by daily perpetrating flagrant crimes, but by falling short of perfect obedience. Hence there is not a just man upon earth, because even in actions that are good in themselves, there is precisely so much sin as there is repugnance, or difficulty, or want of cheerfulness in the will. He owns that divines were accustomed to evade the positive testimony of such passages of Scripture, as, 'There is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not;' but, says he, let us listen to St. Paul: 'The good that I

* Luther's Letter to Emser.

† This word, though not a very common one, has been thought, by excellent divines, to express St. Paul's meaning in Romans vii. verse 20, better than any other . . . "Sin that dwelleth in me"

would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do.' And again : ' I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind.' Let human reasoning and human authority, whether of the church or of councils, give place and submit : if an angel from heaven should teach the contrary, I would not believe him."

" If," continues Luther, " the evil principle, called the flesh, prevented the operation of the good principle, called the spirit, in a man so holy and full of grace as the apostle Paul, how can our theologians maintain that there is no sin in good works ? ' It is not,' say they, ' sin ; it is defect, it is infirmity.'—This is an unscriptural and a dangerous way of speaking. In fact, every Christian feels a continual conflict between the flesh and the spirit as long as he lives ; and therefore in the very best actions there is, in this world, a mixture of the effects of the flesh : but it is not so in heaven. Wherefore, what knowledge other persons may have derived from the scholastic divinity of the times, it is for them to consider : in regard to myself, I am sure I learnt from it nothing of the real nature of sin, of righteousness, of baptism, or of the whole Christian life ; nor any thing of the excellency of God or his works, his grace, his justice. Faith, hope, charity, were to me words without meaning. In short, I not only learnt nothing right ; but I had to UNLEARN every thing which I had acquired in that way. I shall be much surprised if others have succeeded better ; but should there be any such, I sincerely congratulate them. In the schools I lost Jesus Christ ; I have now found him in St. Paul.

" Search the Scriptures" is the precept, which of all others seems to have most deeply impressed the anxious, inquisitive mind of Luther. And further in his inquiries, he never forgot that he himself was personally interested in the great truths of revealed religion. He studied the Bible, not through curiosity, or the love of fame, but from a sense of the importance of its contents, and of his own dangerous situation. How little have those understood the real character of this Reformer, who have looked on him as a turbulent, ambitious innovator, impelled by selfish and worldly motives ! Nothing can be more affecting than the following account, which he himself gives of his own internal troubles. " However blameless a life I might lead as a monk, I experienced a most unquiet

conscience ; I perceived myself a sinner before God ; I saw that I could do nothing to appease him, and I hated the idea of a just God that punishes sinners. I was well versed in all St. Paul's writings ; and, in particular, I had a most wonderful desire to understand the epistle to the Romans. But I was puzzled with the expression, 'THEREIN is the righteousness of God revealed.' My heart rose almost against God with a silent sort of blasphemy : at least in secret I said with great murmur and indignation, Was it not enough that wretched man, already eternally ruined by the curse of original depravity, should be oppressed with every species of misery through the condemning power of the commandment, but that, even through the GOSPEL, God should threaten us with his anger and justice, and thereby add affliction to affliction ? Thus I raged with a troubled conscience. Over and over I turned the above mentioned passage to the Romans most importunately. My thirst to know the apostle's meaning was insatiable.

"At length, while I was meditating day and night on the words, and their connection with what immediately follows, namely, 'The just shall live by faith,' it pleased God to have pity upon me, to open mine eyes, and to show me, that the righteousness of God, which is here said in the gospel to be REVEALED from faith to faith, relates to the method by which God, in his mercy, justifies a sinner through faith, agreeably to what is written, 'The just shall live by faith.' Hence I felt myself a new man, and all the Scriptures appeared to have a new face. I ran quickly through them as my memory enabled me ; I collected together the leading terms ; and I observed, in their meaning, a strict analogy, according to my new views. Thus, in many instances, the WORK of God means that which he works in us ; and the power and wisdom of God, mean the power and wisdom which his Spirit operates in the minds of the faithful ; and in the same manner are to be understood the PATIENCE, the SALVATION, the GLORY, of God.

"The expression, 'RIGHTEOUSNESS of God,' now became as sweet to my mind as it had been hateful before ; and this very passage of St. Paul proved to me the entrance into paradise."*

This interesting account of the steps by which Luther

* Luth. Op. præf. vol. i

was led to evangelical light in the important doctrine of justification by faith, evidently refers to what passed in his mind about the time of the celebrated disputation at Leipsic; and for that reason may seem not improperly introduced in this place. One of his conclusions in that contest led to a discussion on faith, repentance, and free-will; and we find, in his defence of that conclusion, a similar mode of argumentation. He even produces the very same passage of St. Paul, from the first chapter to the Romans; and blames divines of the stamp of Eckius, for adding to the words, ‘The just shall live by faith,’ other words, namely, ‘but not by faith ONLY,’ as necessary to prevent mistakes. He quotes also the tenth chapter of the same epistle, ‘With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,’ and takes notice that, likewise in this verse, righteousness is attributed to faith only. “The works of faith,” continues he, “do not produce the faith, but the faith produces the works. The meaning of the apostle is not, that justified persons neglect good works, but that justification is prior to good works; and that good works can be performed by justified persons only.”

Eckius had maintained, that some of the actions of good men, and particularly their last actions in dying were perfectly free from sin. Luther had too high ideas of the holiness of the divine law, and too deep a sense of the evil of sin, and of the depravity of human nature, to admit this position. Accordingly he opposed it with all his might, and used strong language in support of the contrary sentiment. “There has not,” said he, “for these thousand years, been started a more mischievous, pestilential notion, than that God does not demand a perfect fulfilling of all his laws. This is directly to contradict Jesus Christ. God never alters his perfect law; though he pardons us when we break it. Observe, however, he does not pardon those who are asleep, but those who labour, those who fear, and who say with Job, ‘I know thou wilt not hold me innocent.’ Never suppose that God does not require an exact regard to every tittle of his law; such a notion will soon engender pride, and make you despise that grace, through which his holy law, as a schoolmaster, should compel you to seek deliverance.”

One of Eckius’s propositions, concerning the natural powers of the human mind since the fall of our first parents, seemed strongly tinged with Pelagian sentiments;

and these were diametrically opposite to Luther's views of the gospel. In this matter, therefore, he did not confine himself merely to the defence of his own conclusions, but exposed the doctrines of Eckius with force and animation, terming them impious and heretical in the highest degree, and inconsistent with the apostle Paul, and the whole gospel of Christ. Again, he pressed the grand doctrine of Christianity, that we are justified, before God, by faith only; he showed, that this article of belief was the test of orthodoxy or heresy, according as it was held soundly or corruptly; that all other points were subordinate and centered in this; and that every objection to it, which could possibly be devised, was done away by this single consideration, namely, that a right faith was necessarily productive of good works. "St. Paul," says he, "speaks of a living, not a dead, faith; for a dead faith is merely a speculative opinion. But observe how theologians, building on a solitary passage of St. James, in his second chapter, have dared to oppose the whole current of Scripture. Mankind are exceedingly prone to place confidence in their own works: hence, the great danger of pharisaical doctrine. On the contrary, if you do but take care to instruct the people properly concerning the nature of pure Christian faith, they will then understand the power of such a faith to produce good works; they will see that good works can be produced in no other way; and lastly, that these works are, in fact, the spontaneous and infallible consequence of a right faith."

The contemplation of the ways of Providence is never more instructive than when we can trace the gradual progress of divine light, as it breaks in upon the mind of honest, industrious inquirers after religious truth. Let not therefore the modern critic, whose ideas of the justification of a sinner may, PERHAPS, be more exact and digested than those of Luther were at the time of his controversy with Eckius, hastily condemn, or treat with disrespect, the sentiments and explanations which have been laid before him on this essential point. Let him rather, first, advert to the prevailing ignorance and errors of the clergy in the days of the Reformer; and then, with pleasure and surprise, he will observe the immense strides, towards a complete system of Christian principles, which were taken by an Augustinian monk during the year 1519, in the midst of his persecutions: and moreover, on a

strict examination, he may be astonished to find how perfectly evangelical also at that time Luther was, in the particular article of justification by faith, as to the substance and general view of this important doctrine. Afterwards he defended and explained it with probably as much accuracy and precision, as most succeeding divines have done, though the question has now been agitated and debated for several centuries.

The laws of history oblige us not to omit, that Luther, in the same treatise which contains the defence of his own conclusions against Eckius, hastily expressed a doubt of the divine authority of the epistle of St. James.* Want of a just insight into the views of the inspired writer may account for this temerity, but will not excuse it; however, he seems not to have insisted on his scruples, much less to have persevered in them. In regard to his misapprehension of the meaning of this part of Holy Writ, we may the less wonder, when we reflect, that even the very best modern interpreters of the Bible do not agree in their explanation of the second chapter of St. James.† Luther conceived that chapter to militate against the doctrine of justification by faith. Truth is seldom seen at once in its full order and proportion of parts. But who can doubt that the Saxon Reformer was under a divine influence, which daily taught him his natural sinfulness? None who know themselves as he did, can ever find rest to their consciences but in Christ alone. Necessity, experience, and the word of God, unite in convincing them, that no other way of peace can be found for sinners but through the Redeemer; and, also, that this is the only way by which they can heartily serve God, love their neighbours, and, in general, be fruitful in good works. But more of this important subject hereafter.

In his literary contest with Eckius, Luther apologizes for the inelegance of his style. He confesses that it was negligent and slovenly, and that he had taken no pains to make it accurate, because he had no expectation of immortal fame, nor a desire for it. “I am drawn,” says he, “by force into this contest. I mean, as soon as I can consistently with my conscience, to retire into a corner. Some other persons shall appear on the stage, God

* Resol. Lips. disp.

† The unlearned Christian escapes all this difficulty by receiving the Bible, and acting upon it in simplicity.—ED.

willing." Such was the real modesty of Luther; and so little did he apprehend, that the less he sought for glory, the more he should attain it.

In fact, the publications of Luther were circulated throughout Germany, and were read with the greatest avidity by all ranks and orders. Eckius and other advocates of the Roman Catholic cause, answered their opponent with great heat and indignation. Luther replied with promptitude and precision, and also with the zeal and confidence of a man who was perfectly master of the arguments on both sides of the questions in dispute, and who felt deeply interested in the establishment of truth, and who had thoroughly examined the foundations of his opposition to the prevailing corruptions. By these means the discussions at Leipsic were detailed with minuteness, and continued with spirit; they every where became topics of common conversation; and, as Luther constantly appealed to plain sense, and the written word of God, the scholastic subtleties of Eckius lost their weight and reputation among the people. It is not difficult to see, that the advantages, which, in this way, the cause of the Reformation derived from the public contest at Leipsic, and its consequences, must have been very considerable.

Particular and important instances might be mentioned.

The elector of Saxony was the only prince who publicly favoured the Reformation; and there is good reason to believe, that both his knowledge of the Scriptures and his kindness towards Luther were much increased by what he read and heard from others, relative to the controversy in 1519. It appears from very authentic memoirs by Spalatinus, that the mind of Frederic had been much exercised about divine things, even before his Wittemberg theologian had dared to expose and withstand the corrupt practices of the Roman see. With much diligence and constant prayer he had read the word of God, and was extremely displeased with the usual modes of interpreting it. And when, through the grace of God and the instrumentality of Luther, some rays of evangelical light began to break forth, he opened himself explicitly to his chaplain, Spalatinus, to this effect: "I have always indulged a secret hope, that in a short time we should be blessed with a purer knowledge of what we ought to believe." Meanwhile he gave attention to practical sermons, and read the Scriptures with the greatest delight, especially the four

gospels, from which he collected many excellent passages, and so impressed them on his memory, that whenever occasion required, he could readily apply them with great advantage and comfort. He used particularly to insist on that saying of our Lord in the fifteenth chapter of St. John, "Without me ye can do nothing." "He would dwell on this passage," says Spalatinus, "more than any other. He considered it as decisive against the vulgar notion of free-will; and on this very ground he argued against it, long before Erasmus had dared to publish his miserable, unscriptural performance on the natural liberty of the human mind." "How can it possibly be," said the prince, "that mankind should be perfectly free from all corrupt bias, when Christ himself says, Without me ye can do nothing?"

Such were the reflections, which the disputation at Leipsic, concerning the necessity of GRACE, and the natural condition of man, since the fall of Adam, appear to have produced in the pious mind of Frederic the WISE. While they imply considerable insight into several of the essential doctrines of Christianity, they also throw much light on the religious character of this prince. Frederic had a deep sense of his own weakness and sinfulness; which is a never-failing preparative for the hearty reception of the glad tidings of the gospel! He felt much anxiety that the faith of Christ might be preached among the people in its purity; and this anxiety kept pace with his own progress in practical religion; another excellent symptom of a divine teaching, and of truly spiritual affections. Still this excellent personage remained in bondage to papal authority and papal superstitions; and hence, though his views of the Bible were in perfect harmony with those of Luther, and though he further agreed with the Reformer, that shameful abuses ought to be corrected, dangerous errors exposed, salutary truths propagated, and mankind put into possession of the words of eternal life, he nevertheless continued to feel most disquieting apprehensions, lest, in compassing these important purposes, OFFENCE should be given to the majesty of the Roman pontiffs.

It may deserve notice, that soon after the conferences at Leipsic, the elector of Saxony had a severe illness; and that the industrious Luther, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his necessary employments, found time to compose a small tract, for the express purpose of comforting

this good prince in his afflictions. The wisdom, the sincerity, and the Christian affection, which the author exhibited in this little treatise, would, no doubt, have a tendency to increase the estimation in which he was already held by Frederic.*

The celebrated Philip Melancthon, who is always numbered among the most illustrious and respectable instruments of the Reformation, was actually present at the public disputations with Eckius. Some say, that he placed himself near Carolstadt, and suggested so many things to him during the combat, that Eckius called out to him, "Philip, hold your tongue: mind your own business, and don't interfere with mine." However, he himself tells us, that he was a mere spectator and hearer; and that he sat among the crowd. As the dispute continued many days, the different accounts might perhaps appear sufficiently consistent, were we acquainted with all the circumstances. Melancthon concludes one of his letters to Ecolampadius in the following manner: "Eckius was much admired for his many and striking ingenuities. You know Carolstadt; he is certainly a man of worth and of extraordinary erudition. As to Luther, whom I have long known most intimately, his lively genius, his learning, and eloquence, are the objects of my admiration; and it is impossible not to be in love with his truly sincere and pure Christian spirit."

As the reader by this time must be tolerably acquainted with the ecclesiastical combat at Leipsic, it will be unnecessary to detain him any longer with particulars from Melancthon's report of that famous controversy. The name of this great man is here introduced, chiefly for the purpose of showing, how the Roman Catholic expectations of the effect of the ostentatious challenge of Eckius were frustrated in every way. Melancthon was then only

* The opinion which Erasmus entertained of this little tract, is expressed in a letter, written several years after, to the bishop of Basil. "I send you a little book, of which Luther is the author. It is divided into fourteen heads, and is extremely approved, even by those, who, in general, have the greatest possible aversion to his doctrines. He wrote it before matters came to the present extremities. The man has been enraged by hostile treatment; I heartily wish, that, by the means of friendly admonitions, he might be brought back to moderate sentiments." Seckendorf observes on this extract from Erasmus, "The disease of the church at that time was not of such a nature, that it could be cured by any of Erasmus's plasters."

about twenty-three years of age; and, as yet, had employed his time principally in the duties of his Greek professorship, and in the cultivation of general literature. Already, indeed, he had favoured Luther's intentions of teaching pure Christianity, and of delivering it from the reigning darkness and superstition; but his wishes in this respect had hitherto originated in the native candour and benevolence of his temper, and in his abhorrence of all disguise, artifice, and tyranny, rather than in any distinct insight which he had acquired into particular instances of the corruption of Christian doctrine, or of the shameful practices of the ecclesiastical domination. The conferences at Leipsic seem to have had a mighty effect in first determining this elegant scholar to employ his talents in the study of theology. As Melancthon is said to have possessed the rare faculty of "discerning truth in its most intricate connections and combinations," it was not probable that such a person should be moved either by the flimsy objections of Eckius, or by his pompous display of scholastic arguments. He was not, however, blind to the dangerous influence of a man, who had some pretensions to learning, who had a strong memory, and who, being constantly impelled by ambitious hopes of advancement, and unrestrained by modesty or conscience, was ever ready to make the most positive assertions. In listening to the sophistry of this papal advocate, Melancthon became better acquainted than before with the argumentative resources of the Romish religion; at the same time that the solid reasonings of Luther, supported by constant appeals to the Scriptures, effectually convinced his mind of the soundness of the principles of his industrious and persecuted friend, and determined him to embark, in the cause of religious liberty, with zeal and fidelity. From the period of this famous public disputation, he applied himself most intensely to the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the defence of pure Christian doctrine; and he is justly esteemed by Protestants to have been, under Divine Providence, the most powerful coadjutor of the Saxon Reformer. His mild and peaceable temper, his aversion to schismatic contention, his reputation for piety and for knowledge, and, above all, his happy art of exposing error and maintaining truth in the most perspicuous language, all these endowments concurred to render him eminently serviceable to the revival of the religion of

Christ. Little did Eckius imagine, that the public disputation, in which he had foreseen nothing but victory, and exultation, and the downfall of Lutheranism, would give rise to another theological champion, who should contend for Christian truth and Christian liberty with the primitive spirit of an apostle. At Wittemberg, Melancthon had probably been well acquainted with Luther's lectures on divinity; but it was in the citadel of Leipsic, that he heard the Romish tenets defended by all the arguments that ingenuity could devise: there his suspicions were strengthened respecting the evils of the existing hierarchy; and there his righteous spirit was roused to imitate, in the grand object of his future inquiries and exertions, the indefatigable endeavours of his zealous and adventurous friend.

The pious reader will not think this relation tedious. In the event and consequences of the ecclesiastical conflict between the Romish and the Protestant advocates, he will see much cause to adore the wisdom and goodness of that Being, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."*

CHAP. V.

FROM THE ATTEMPTS OF MILTITZ AND ECKIUS, TO THE
CRITICAL SITUATION OF LUTHER IN 1520.

FURTHER ATTEMPTS OF MILTITZ.

THE COURAGE AND RESOLUTION OF LUTHER.

HIS LETTER TO LEO X.

HIS CRITICAL SITUATION IN 1520.

THE contest with Eckius, if we include the necessary preparations for the public debate at Leipsic, and also the continuation of the controversy, lengthened, as it was, by polemical tracts and letters, took up a considerable part of the year 1519. The abilities of this papal disputant had been candidly acknowledged by Melancthon, in a letter to his friend Ecolampadius; nevertheless, the general account which that letter contained of the Leipsic

* Ephes. i. 11.

conflict provoked him so exceedingly, that, in the short space of three days, he published a most acrimonious reply to its author, in which he affects to treat this learned and excellent reformer as a mere paltry grammarian, that might have some knowledge of Greek and Latin, but was unworthy the notice of a divine who had any good pretensions to theological knowledge.

Melancthon's rejoinder to Eckius is elegant, acute, and temperate. It displays the scholar and the Christian; and at that time must have afforded a prognostication of the advantages which the Church of Christ would one day derive from the writings of a person of such extraordinary talents and religious dispositions. This performance consists of only five folio pages; but it did excellent service to the Lutheran cause.*

In the mean time, Miltitz, the pope's nuncio, was not inattentive to the object of his commission. Early in this year he had agreed with Luther, that the points in dispute should be discussed before some learned and dignified ecclesiastic in Germany, such as the archbishop elector of Treves, or the bishop of Nuremberg. He had also personally conferred on this subject with the former prelate, who approved the plan, wrote to the elector of Saxony in prosecution of it, and made Luther himself the fairest promises of safe conduct and handsome treatment. The unsuccessful effect of these negotiations is to be ascribed to several causes. 1. The ensuing debates at Leipsic excited the attention of all Germany. The questions concerning the pope's supremacy and the nature of pontifical indulgences were then of immense importance; and it was not consistent with the reputation of Luther, that he should be absent from such a scene. 2. Moreover, during the INTERREGNUM of the empire, it appeared doubtful whether any safe conduct could be obtained, in which it might be prudent for him to confide. 3. Then he augured no good from the information which he had received, that cardinal Cajetan was certainly at Coblenz with the archbishop of Treves. 4. Cajetan, while at Coblenz, wrote a most flattering letter to the elector of Saxony, but took care not to say a single syllable concerning Luther's business. — Frederic the WISE understood this suspicious silence, and contrived to meet the archbishop of Treves at Francfort, where, as we have already observed, it was

* Op. Luth. i. 340, b.

agreed that the examination of the ecclesiastical matters should be postponed till the next German diet. 5. Miltitz himself, through the persuasions and authority of Frederic, at length acceded to the same plan, and advised Luther to remain in Saxony, and not to think at present of undertaking a journey to Coblentz.

The Roman pontiff, it must be owned, had imposed on his nuncio a task which was not very easy to be performed. Miltitz at first came armed with seventy attendants, for the express purpose of seizing the heretic, and carrying him prisoner to Rome. When this scheme had failed, on account of the extreme popularity of Luther, he appears to have done his utmost, in the way of kindness and condescension, to draw a recantation of errors from the reformer. He told the elector of Saxony, that "peace and reconciliation were the objects of his wishes, but that he had great fears he should be driven to extremities. The pontiff," he said, "was highly indignant, that Luther's cause had been so long delayed, and that the culprit in the mean time should be allowed to continue his offensive sermons."*

Neither promises nor threatenings appear to have materially affected the firm determinations of Martin Luther. When, through humane treatment, he was most softened and most inclined to make concessions, he never surrendered unwarily a single article of that belief which he thought authorized by the revealed word; and when most pressed and most alarmed by tyrannical and insolent mandates, still he always resisted the unchristian proposal of unconditional retraction. Invariably he offered to submit his tenets to the authority of the word of God, and continued to insist on the unreasonableness of requiring him to yield implicitly to the mere dictates of arbitrary power. Finding that no means were employed but those of imperious, pontifical despotism, he began more and more to suspect that the ecclesiastical monarch, who domineered in the church in so absolute and presumptuous a manner, must be the very antichrist described in Scripture. But the conviction was gradual; the effect of sober thought and study. Sudden impressions on the imagination were little regarded by Luther. He particularly informs us, that he was not one of those who pretended

to see, at the first glance, the full force and meaning of the word of God.*

What might have been the result of a conference at Coblenz, under the direction of the elector of Treves, we are left to conjecture. Certainly Luther himself apprehended much danger from that measure, as circumstances then were. "Charles Miltitz," said he, "is so ridiculous, that he would have me go to Coblenz, and defend myself before the archbishop elector of Treves, in the presence of cardinal Cajetan; and yet this man owns, that he has received no precept from Rome concerning the matter. Every where, from all quarters, and by any method, I perceive, my life is sought!!!"†

Towards the end of this same year 1519, Luther began to preach on the propriety of administering to the laity the communion in BOTH KINDS. This step gave great offence to George duke of Saxony, who complained to his nephew, the elector, of the violent proceedings of the Wittemberg theologian. He accused him of having published a sermon on the Eucharist, which contained great marks of pride and self-sufficiency. He admonished Frederic to beware of supporting a man, however eminent for learning and talents, who had the presumption to suppose that nobody but himself was sufficiently enlightened by the grace of God to teach true religion. The tenets of Luther, concerning the sacrament, he said, very much resembled those of the Bohemian heretics; and that in fact, since the publication of his sermon on that subject, it was reported, the number of those disobedient sectarians amounted to more than six thousand. Lastly, he put the elector in mind, that for a long time he had justly merited the reputation of a wise prince and good Christian; but that at present he was in considerable danger of disgracing both himself and his country, by supporting licentious innovations in religion. "If he did not take care, Luther would soon cease to be called the professor of Wittemberg, and would become the bishop, or rather the heresiarch, of Bohemia."

The elector of Saxony replied with his usual caution, declaring, that he had never ventured, nor would venture, to defend either the sermons or the disputations of his Wittemberg professor of divinity. On that point, he said, he had constantly held precisely the same language, both

* Luth. Op. præf. vol. i.

† Luth. Epist. 110, 111. lib. i.

to the cardinal legate, and also to Miltitz the nuncio of his holiness; and that he should continue to pursue the same system of conduct;—that is, he should not say one word on the merits of Luther's publication, but leave it to be defended by the author himself, who had appealed to the wisdom and authority of learned and impartial judges, and who was certainly bound to wait respectfully the event of their inquiry and decision. The elector owned, that, notwithstanding much clamour had been raised against the discourse or little treatise of his learned professor, he had heard that it was highly approved by many wise and skilful persons as a truly Christian composition. Whether the report was well founded, he knew not; but he felt it painful to be told, that in his own dominions heresies were spreading; and still more painful to be suspected of giving them his countenance.

In this business the dukes of Saxony conducted themselves agreeably to their respective characters. George was bigoted to the superstitious maxims in which he had been educated, and wished to restrain Luther by the strong hand of despotic power. Frederic, both more enlightened and more conscientious, at all times gladly promoted the progress of evangelical truth, but dreaded to be held up as a principal actor in scenes of so much contention and danger, and which called for clearer and better digested principles than he had yet acquired. In the mean time Luther steadily followed the track pointed out to him by a diligent and persevering study of the Holy Scriptures. He had broached the question concerning the communion in both kinds, and it was not his way to abandon, for slight causes, such pursuits in religion as he conceived important. Early therefore in the year 1520, he defended his sermon concerning the nature of the sacrament, by publishing in the German language an explicit declaration of his sentiments on that subject. He did not insist upon the point as matter of strict right, but contented himself, as yet, with expressing a wish that the Church would pass a decree, for the purpose of granting to the laity the communion in BOTH kinds. He said, that the Bohemians, who had obtained liberty from the Church to administer the Lord's supper in the manner which he now recommended, ought not to be accounted heretics; and that in regard to the remainder of the Hussite multitudes, he had no certain information of their doctrines.

All he knew was, that they were a persecuted people, and were compelled to perform their religious services in dens and caverns. They were accused, indeed, of committing the most horrid crimes in those secret recesses; but the truth of the charges might well be doubted, as it was no new thing for those, who had been condemned by the court of Rome, to be CALUMNIATED with the most scandalous reports. "Take notice, reader," says Luther, "how peculiarly unfortunate I am! Hitherto I have been persecuted for my faith, and my conjectures. But now they find fault with me, merely because I express a wish that some new regulations might be made by a future council." Then in support of his own conduct, he alleged the example of Pius II. who, before he was chosen pope, had most earnestly desired that a general council would decree liberty of marriage to the clergy.*

These spirited declarations of the reformer did not altogether suit the temper of the elector's court. They again exhorted him to peace and caution. But the tender conscience of Luther was not to be lulled by specious prudential lessons concerning moderation and decorum. We have not Spalatinus's letters on this occasion, but Luther's answer will afford the necessary information. "I am oppressed with a multitude of concerns; and I heartily wish I could be relieved from the duty of teaching and reading lectures. Nothing could be more agreeable to me than to be released from this employment. But if I am to continue a teacher, I cannot comprehend the notion of yourself, my Spalatinus, and of the friends you mention, namely, that sacred theology may be taught WITHOUT giving offence to the pontiffs. The Scriptures themselves, in the most explicit manner, lay open men's abuses of the Scriptures, which abuses the pontiffs cannot bear to have mentioned. I have given up myself to this work in the name of the Lord. May his will be done! The cause is that of mankind in general; let us, in faith and prayer, commit the event to God, and we shall be safe. For what can our adversaries do? Will they murder us? They cannot do that twice. Will they asperse us as heretics? Was not Christ himself treated as a malefactor? When I contemplate HIS sufferings, I blush for shame to think that my trials should be thought so considerable, when in reality they are nothing; and so we

* Seck. p. 95.

should reckon such trials, had we right views of mortification, of self-denial, and, in a word, of the Christian cross, to which in our days we are perfect strangers. Cease then your attempts to divert me from my purpose. My enemies may rage, but I shall smile in security. I am determined to abide the event, and not to give way to any unbecoming fears. I should, indeed, be sorry to involve the prince in my concerns ; otherwise, at this moment the world should see a very explicit publication of my sentiments, a publication, which though it might still more provoke the FURIES, would at the same time expose their folly."

In much the same spirit of determined resolution and of confidence in the justice of his cause, he wrote to the new emperor Charles V., imploring however, in modest and submissive terms, the assistance and protection " of so great a prince." " Nothing," he said, " was nearer his heart, than that he might be permitted to discharge his duty quietly in his own little sphere. The violent and deceitful practices of others had compelled him to appear in public ; but the very best men living, as well as his own conscience, would witness, that his sole object was, the propagation of evangelical truth, in opposition to the superstitions of human tradition. For this cause, continues he, during almost three years I have been persecuted in every way that my enemies could invent. In vain have I proposed terms of peace, in vain have I offered to be silent, in vain have I begged for information and the correction of my errors. After having tried all methods without success, I have judged it advisable to follow the example of St. Athanasius, in applying to your imperial majesty, if so be it may please God in that way to protect his own cause. I humbly therefore beseech your most Serene Majesty, that as you bear the sword for the praise of the good and the punishment of the bad, you would deign to take under the shadow of your wings the cause of truth ; and as to myself, I crave your support not one moment longer than while I shall appear to have reason on my side. Abandon me the instant I am found impious or heretical. All I beg is, that my doctrines, whether true or false, may not be condemned unheard and without examination. If your most sacred Majesty, by your interposition, should prevent the exercise of tyrannical power, such a conduct would be worthy of your royal and imperial

throne, would adorn your government, and consecrate to posterity the age in which you live.”*

The various letters and publications of Luther, at the critical periods of these memorable years, contribute more towards laying open the real disposition and secret views of this reformer, than whole volumes of controversial writings. The reader will, therefore, excuse me for detailing many circumstances of this part of ecclesiastical history with more than ordinary minuteness. They are closely connected with the very essence of the Reformation and the revival of evangelical doctrine.

When men's PRINCIPLES are unsettled, we naturally look for inconsistency in their PRACTICE. Yet, after a very diligent review of the most authentic records concerning the great Saxon reformer, I am convinced, that it will be found no easy matter to fix on his character any charge of inconsistent conduct. Luther never does violence to his conscience; he is always in quest of information from the purest sources; and he is constantly obedient “to the powers that be,” as long as submission to those powers, in his judgment, does not clash with the Divine Will. On these grounds let his life be examined and tried, and it will not disappoint his greatest admirers. The reformer will appear as honest and indefatigable in investigating truth, as he was resolute and intrepid in defending it.

It may be almost superfluous to mention, how entirely the preceding letters and declarations of Luther harmonize with this representation of his motives; and a similar observation is applicable to several other of his performances, which made their appearance about the same time.†

1. To the censures of the divines of Louvain and Cologne, he published a very animated reply, following their strictures article by article. He said, they had not produced against him the shadow of a reason; but had treated him with more than Turkish cruelty and arrogance. In opposing Eckius and his advocates, he owned, he had been compelled to use some exertion; but, on the contrary, in reading the empty and wretched sentence of these universities he felt his spirits depressed, so as to be more disposed to weep over them, than to write a reply. Antichrist could not be far off, when men set up themselves so impudently above the written word of God. It was to

* Epistol. Luth. ad Carol. V

† The beginning of 1520.

him a consolatory reflection, that many worthy men had been unjustly condemned in a similar way, as Occam, Valla, Picus, Wesselus, and even the great Érasmus. He had no hesitation in adding to the list the names of John Huss, and Jerom of Prague, whose victorious fame at the council of Constance,—not to mention the celebrated letter of Poggius the Florentine,*—neither all the popes nor universities together would ever be able to extinguish. The theologians of Louvain and Cologne had been wanting both in charity and in justice. They had condemned him without warning, admonition, or hearing: all this was directly contrary to the maxims of Christianity. In regard to the pope, they had treated him with the greatest indecorum. They had passed sentence on a book which was dedicated to him, and humbly laid at his feet; and this at the very time when the author was waiting for the judgment of his holiness. On the whole, Luther considers these divines as decidedly of the Pelagian stamp; as persons who did not submit cordially to Scripture, but fabricated a religion of their own imagination, which in its nature was opposite to the grace and gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. In the negotiations between Miltitz and Luther, it had been agreed that the latter should publish a concise protestation of his faith, and of his firm adherence to the Roman catholic church; and that he should endeavour to express himself in the most obsequious and conciliatory terms. This protestation came out in January 1520, and runs very much in the same strain as the letter to the new emperor Charles V., which is already before the reader. He also calls God to witness, That, as far as he knew, he had never said a word, either in his school or the pulpit, which was adverse to the word of God, or the salvation of men's souls; that he was so sincere and obedient to the Holy Church, as to be willing to die in her cause; that at any time, upon a safe-conduct being ensured to him, he was ready to appear before judges both secular and spiritual; and that, though every thing he had done was for the glory of God, and the good of all the Christian world, without the least prospect of private advantage in any imaginable way, still he met with no other return than to be traduced as a heretic. From the bottom of his heart, he said, he forgave his enemies; and he entreated them in

* See p. 200 of this vol.

the name of Almighty God, to form a more favourable judgment of his motives, and to abstain from calumniating him in so rash and unbecoming a manner.*

The native good sense of Luther, as well as his gratitude to the elector of Saxony, would, doubtless, induce him to be as temperate and conciliatory in his language, as was consistent with the convictions of a man who regulated his actions entirely by the will of God. Therefore, among his reasons for writing, at this same time, modest and submissive letters to two German bishops, we may reckon his respect for the Saxon court. He entreated the archbishop of Mentz, not to give credit to his calumniators, who, he said, consisted of two classes;—one of which had never read his writings, and the other were actuated altogether by the most bitter animosity. On the same day and to the same purport, he addressed the bishop of Mersburg.

The archbishop replied, that as he had never read his writings, he was not disposed to censure them; but it was with great grief, that he heard of the violent disputes of celebrated professors respecting frivolous opinions and points of little consequence, as he termed them, such as of free-will, and the pope's power, whether it be of divine or of human authority! Such amusements were by no means becoming a true Christian; but rather tended to excite a hurtful curiosity, and to foment disobedience among the people. He understood also, that the authority of GENERAL COUNCILS had been disparaged by some persons, who adhered to their own opinions most pertinaciously. This sort of conduct produced much mischief. In private, and among learned persons, questions of that nature might, perhaps, be handled advantageously, and certainly with less danger than before an ignorant and illjudging multitude. Lastly, he highly approved of his teaching the great truths of Scripture, provided he gave his lectures in a spirit of peace and obedience to the established church!

The answer of the bishop of Mersburg is concise, and borders on severity. He could not understand, and he exceedingly disliked, those heavy censures of the Roman pontiff. He lamented that Luther had injected scruples into the minds of the people concerning the Sacrament: and, in his judgment, a man of such signal industry might employ his talents in a manner, that should be more

* See k. p. 95. Luth. Op. vol. i.

conducive to the promotion of Christian charity, and the salvation of mankind.—This bishop calls Luther his “venerable brother.”—The archbishop of Mentz addresses him with the terms, “honourable, religious, and beloved in Christ.”

But besides what have been mentioned, there are other writings of Luther, of nearly the same date, and of much greater importance.

His celebrated letter to the pontiff Leo X., in the year 1520, and his treatise on Christian Liberty, were the effects of the last effort of Charles Miltitz, to produce a reconciliation between the reformer and the court of Rome. As Luther was an ecclesiastic of the Augustine order, Miltitz endeavoured to persuade the fathers of that fraternity to depute, from their general assembly, then held in Saxony, some persons who should persuade their refractory brother to desist from his opposition to the lawful commands of his superiors. This measure was tried; and Luther received the deputation with the most kind and dutiful attention; and very soon afterwards he had a friendly conference with Miltitz himself. A distinct account of this part of the negotiation of the pope's nuncio is contained in the following letter of Luther to Spalatinus;* and it is the more expedient that we should have recourse to this authentic document, because the whole affair has been miserably misrepresented by papal writers, and particularly by Maimbourg,† who compares Luther to the traitor Judas, and the Augustinian fathers to the holy apostles. “Miltitz and myself,” says Luther, “met at Lichtemberg; and we have agreed upon the following terms,—from which HE entertains the most sanguine hopes. I am to print and publish some little tract, and preface it with a letter to the pontiff. That letter is to contain a narrative of my proceedings, and an assurance that I never intended any personal affront to his holiness; at the same time I am allowed to lay a heavy load of blame upon Eckius. As this plan is founded in the most perfect truth, it is impossible that I should have the smallest objection to it. In the most submissive manner, I mean to propose silence on both sides; in order that nothing of a conciliatory nature may be omitted on my part. I need not tell you, that it has always been my wish to bring about peace. I shall have

* Lib. i. Ep. 141.

† Maimbourg, in Seck. p. 94.

every thing ready in a few days. If the event should answer our hopes, all will be well; but if it should not, I still have no doubt but GOOD will be the consequence.”*

This is evidently the language of a man, who was not very anxious concerning the success of the project in contemplation. The popish advocates go much further and accuse the reformer of actual insincerity towards the Roman see. His humble professions of obedience, his wishes for peace and unity, and his decorous treatment of the person of Leo X., they think, were all downright hypocrisy, and designed to serve no other purpose than that of gaining time, and of rendering the pontificate ridiculous.† But these rash charges will not be regarded for a moment by any one who attends to the unfeigned disclosures, which Luther repeatedly made of his most secret sentiments. Early in the year 1520, he writes to Spalatinus thus: “I am extremely distressed in my mind. I have not much doubt but the pope is the real ANTI-CHRIST. The lives and conversation of the popes, their actions, their decrees, all agree most wonderfully to the descriptions of him in Holy Writ.” It is to these views of the true nature of the papacy,—which were every day becoming clearer in Luther’s mind,—that we are to ascribe that species of indifference with which he looked to the termination of the present negotiation. The man, who was almost convinced of the antichristian character of the whole Romish system, could feel no great anxiety to obtain the approbation of the sovereign pontiff. With a truly Christian spirit he seems to have resigned the event to the Divine disposal, and to have cherished a full persuasion in his own mind, that some great GOOD to the Church of God would result from the step which he was about to take. If the court of Rome should adopt prudent and temperate counsels, a reformation of abuses and a revival of pure religion might still take place under the established hierarchy; and if they continued to turn a deaf ear to entreaty, advice, and remonstrance, such presumption and arrogance would more strongly mark the features of Antichrist, and hasten his downfall.

It must be owned, however, that it was no easy matter for the Saxon reformer, in his present state of mind and circumstances, to devise an epistle to a haughty pontiff, which should exhibit the required degree of submission,

* Seck, p. 98.

† Pallavicini.—Maimbourg.

do justice to his own conscience and cause, and, at the same time, escape the animadversion and censures of his enemies. But the honest mind of Luther, by simplicity and plain dealing, often effected that, which it would have puzzled an intriguing minister of state to compass by the most artful policy. He has not, indeed, on this occasion, escaped the opposite charges of hypocritical courtesy, and of audacious insolence; but as these have been made only by bigoted and ill-informed zealots of the Roman religion, we may dismiss the slander without further notice.* The epistle to Leo, as well as the treatise on Christian Liberty which accompanied it, are extant; and are lasting monuments of the good sense, integrity, and firmness of their author. They also merit particular attention, on account of their being among the last, if not the very last, of Luther's writings, in which he professes obedience to the Romish church and to pontifical authority. Having already adverted, more than once, to the motives which probably induced him to treat the rulers of that church in a reverential manner, long after he had seen just cause to mourn over their scandalous practices, it will be unnecessary to make further remarks on the civil and dutiful terms in which he addresses Leo X. Every considerate person must allow, that while Luther remained a member of the Roman catholic communion, he was bound upon all occasions of intercourse with his superiors to use the decent and customary language of a subordinate ecclesiastic.

That truly excellent and judicious protestant, Seckendorf, in his Historical Commentary on Lutheranism, calls on all the bitterest enemies of the Reformation, to lay aside their prejudices, to read over and over again Luther's last letter to the pontiff, and not to stifle the honest convictions of their judgment and conscience. They cannot, he thinks, but admit, how well contrived it was to stir up the mind of Leo to a serious investigation and correction of abuses. It treated the pope himself with the greatest tenderness and respect, while the rash, impolitic proceedings of Cajetan and Eckius were exposed in just strains of censure and reproach. The whole letter is much too long to find a place in this history. A general account of it will, however, be expected; and the rather, as it may seem surprising that Seckendorf, who on most occasions

* Pallavicini.—Maimbourg.

is sufficiently copious in his extracts, and who reckons this composition among the few writings which are truly admirable, does not produce a syllable of it among his numerous articles and additions.*

In the exordium of his letter, Luther declares, that though he had been compelled, by the persecutions of such as flattered his holiness, to appeal from the Roman see to a future council, yet he had never harboured the least ill will to the pontiff, but had always prayed God to bestow upon his person and his see every kind of blessing. He had learnt, he said, to despise, in general, the threats of those who were continually alarming him with the pontifical vengeance; nevertheless it gave him pain to be represented as one who had not spared even the pope himself. Such an accusation he could not treat lightly, as it was in fact, he said, the true cause of that very letter to his holiness, which he was then writing.

He owned, that he had treated the impious doctrines of his adversaries with much severity; and he was so far from repenting of what he had done in that respect, that, whatever man's judgment might be, he intended zealously to persevere in the same practice. He was supported by the example of Christ, of St. Paul, and the prophets; whereas the delicate ears of the present age, accustomed to nothing but most pernicious flattery, could not endure plain truths. He was not, however, conscious that he had in any instance spoken of the PERSON of the present pontiff in a manner which was not highly respectful; and if he had really done otherwise, there was nothing which he more thoroughly disapproved, or would be more ready to retract. Moreover, he said, that Leo X. was so generally celebrated for leading a blameless life, that it would not be in the power of the greatest character to injure his unsullied reputation. He was not yet so stupid as to think of attacking a man, whom every body praised. Besides, it had never been, nor ever should be his practice, to inveigh even against those who were notorious for bad morals. It gave him no pleasure to dwell on the faults of any man; he was sufficiently conscious of the beam in his own eye, and would never be the first to cast a stone. (John viii. 7.) His sole object, his sole contention, related to the DIVINE WORD. Every thing else he was ready to give

* Sleidan gives the substance of it in brief; and the whole is to be found in *Luther's Works*, vol. ii. Witt.

up to any person, but he could never give up his right to set forth the WORD OF TRUTH. Whoever had conceived differently, either of him or his writings, had mistaken the matter.

But the pope's SEE, or, in other words, the COURT OF ROME, neither Leo nor any man living could deny, was more corrupt than Babylon and Sodom. Luther declared, that he considered that court as desperately wicked: he detested it; he had withstood it, and should continue to withstand it as long as he preserved any thing of the spirit of the gospel. It was a most licentious den of thieves: Antichrist could add nothing to its impiety. What can a pope do among such monsters of wickedness, even supposing him to be supported by three or four learned and excellent cardinals? He is like a lamb in the midst of wolves, as a Daniel among the lions, or as an Ezekiel among scorpions.

He most sincerely wished that Leo X. could be induced to live on his own patrimony, or on some small ecclesiastical preferment, and resign the pontificate, which in reality was now only fit for those sons of perdition who flattered him on account of his glorious pre-eminence. "O Leo!" said he, "you sit on a most inauspicious and dangerous throne. The more wicked and execrable your court is, the more readily do they use your name and authority, to ruin the fortunes and the souls of the people, to multiply their villanies, and to oppress the whole Church of God. I speak the truth, because I wish you well. If Bernard, with an honest freedom, deplored the situation of pope Eugenius, at a time when there was room for better hopes of the court of Rome,—though even then very corrupt;—why may not we, after an accumulation of most ruinous corruptions for upwards of three hundred years, be allowed to speak freely? Those, who thus complain and execrate the court of Rome, are your best friends, and do you the best services. Nothing can be more opposite to Christ and his religion, than the practices of the Roman see."

He said, he could go still further, and honestly declare, that to inveigh even against the corrupt court of Rome, was a thought which had never entered his mind. He had considered the case of that court as desperate; he had said, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still;"* and he

* Revel. xxii. 11.

had actually given himself up to the study of the holy Scriptures, with the view of being useful to his brethren with whom he lived in the university.

While he was prosecuting this plan, in a peaceable and quiet manner, and with a fair prospect of success, John Eckius, laying hold of a single word, which had casually escaped him, concerning the supremacy of the Roman church, had drawn him unexpectedly into a public disputation. This ostentatious Thraso pretended to venture every thing for the glory of God and the honour of the apostolic see; whereas in reality he was seeking, not the supremacy of St. Peter, but his own rank and aggrandizement among the divines of the age; and, in this view, he had supposed it might be of considerable use to him, if he could drag Luther in triumph. Puffed up with the idea of being able to abuse the papal authority to his own purposes, the sophist had looked forward to certain victory; and now that he had utterly failed, he was carried away with the most outrageous passion, conscious that it was by his own fault, and not Luther's, if the latter, in defending himself, had said any thing which might discredit the Roman see.

Luther then entreated the pope, that he might be permitted to say a word in support of his own cause, and also to point out those who were the real ENEMIES of his holiness. He took it for granted that Leo was well acquainted with the proceedings of his imprudent, unfortunate, nay, unfaithful legate, cardinal Cajetan. This man, he said, might have composed all the differences with a single word. He had only to prescribe to Luther's adversaries the same silence, which, on that condition, Luther had promised to preserve. Whereas, not content with this fair compromise, he began to justify the licentious practices of his enemies, and to insist upon a recantation from him, even when the pontifical mandates by no means warranted so tyrannical a demand. Thus the pleasing hopes of an accommodation had been ruined, and the dissension much exasperated. All the mischief which followed was to be ascribed entirely to Cajetan and not to Luther, who in vain had exerted every nerve to procure peace and silence.

Charles Miltitz, he said, had used his utmost endeavours to repair the harm which had been caused by the pride and temerity of Cajetan; but had been prevented from

bringing matters to a successful issue, by the unseasonable disputations of ECKIUS. This was the name of the pope's real enemy. He was a man who did not seek truth, but glory ; a man, who, by falsehood, pretence, and artifice, had, from the beginning of these troubles, done every thing he could to confound men's judgments and inflame their passions ; and who, it could not be denied, had brought to light, through his selfish and intemperate conduct, many of the ignominious corruptions of the court of Rome.

From this instance, he said, the pope might learn, that no enemy was more pernicious than a flatterer. At this very time the papal authority languished ; even the name of the Roman court excited disgust ; while its disgraceful ignorance was the topic of common conversation. Little or nothing might have been said of these things, if the conciliatory measures of Miltitz and himself had not been defeated by Eckius.

Lastly, Luther informed the pope, that some principal persons of his own order, at the particular instance of Miltitz, had requested him to address his holiness in respectful terms ; to defend, at the same time, his innocence with becoming humility ; and to express a hope, that the native goodness of Leo X. would devise some expedient by which the misunderstanding between them might be prevented from being pushed to the last extremity. He said, this measure so entirely harmonized with what he had always offered and wished, that now, with the greatest humility, he besought his holiness to impose silence upon those flatterers, who, while they pretended peace, were the enemies of peace. But NO PERSON, he added, must desire him to RECENT, unless he intended to increase the dissensions. He further distinctly stated, that he could not permit ANY RULES to be prescribed to him for the interpretation of the word of God : the word of God ought not to be fettered. If these two points were granted, there was nothing that he would not most willingly either do or suffer. He hated contests, and would take care to irritate no man. His holiness, by an easy mandate, could bring the present cause before himself, and enjoin the parties to be silent and to live in peace. It had long been his wish that this step might be taken.

He concluded with admonishing Leo not to be seduced by those flatterers, who would make him a sort of god,

and would persuade him, that he can command and require every thing; who call him the lord of the whole world, deny that any thing truly Christian can exist without his authority, and idly prate concerning his power in heaven, in hell, and in purgatory. These, Luther said, were the real enemies of the pope, and sought the destruction of his soul: so says the prophet Isaiah, "O my people, they which call thee BLESSED, cause thee to err."* Those greatly erred, who placed the pope above a general council and the universal Church, and who attributed to him alone the right of interpreting Scripture. All such persons were at this moment endeavouring to establish their own impieties in the Church under the protection of Leo; and it was much to be lamented that, through people of this description, Satan had had great success, during the times of the predecessors of the present pope.

If he should be thought to have used too great freedom in addressing so dignified a personage, a strong sense of duty must be his apology. He well knew the infinite dangers to which Leo was exposed at Rome, insomuch that the smallest assistance, even from his meanest brother, might be serviceable. He might perhaps have forgotten the majesty of the pope, while he was discharging the duty of benevolence; but he had determined to avoid all flattery in a business so weighty and full of danger; and if, in what he had said, he was not considered as something more than the pope's most obedient subject, if he were not understood to be his true friend, THERE WAS ONE, WHO COULD BOTH UNDERSTAND AND JUDGE.

That he might not approach his holiness empty, Luther said, he presented him a little treatise on Christian Liberty. As an omen of his good hope and future reconciliation, he had ventured to dedicate it to Leo X. himself. From the perusal of it a judgment might be formed, in what kind of studies its author would have chosen to spend his time, if he might have been permitted.

The small treatise on Christian Liberty was regarded by its author as a COMPENDIUM of the Christian life. In the beginning of it he says, He was conscious of his want of knowledge, and he had no pretensions to elegance; but having struggled through many and various temptations,

* Chap. iii. ver. 12. There is a peculiar propriety in this quotation; *Beatissime, et Beatitudo*, being the terms commonly used in addressing the pope. See the English marginal reading.

he hoped he had learnt something of the nature of faith, and could speak of it more practically, than those subtle verbal disputants, who scarcely understood their own meaning.

He premises two axioms, which, in appearance, contradict each other, but which in reality, he said, would be found perfectly consistent.

1. A Christian man is of all men the most completely free; and is subject to none.

2. A Christian man is of all men the most ready to serve others, and is subject to every one.*

In illustration of the former, he shows that the Christian is justified and filled with all good, and made a true son of God by faith alone. “And though,” says he, “he is abundantly justified inwardly, according to the Spirit, through faith, possessing whatever he ought to have,—except that the principle of faith ought to grow stronger in him day by day—yet, while he remains upon earth in this mortal state, he must keep his body in subjection, and perform those duties which result from an intercourse with his fellow-creatures. Here then it is, in the Christian scheme, that *WORKS* are to be placed; here it is that sloth and indolence are forbidden; and here the convert is bound to take care that, by fasting, watching, labour, and other suitable means, his body be so exercised and subdued to the spirit, that it may obey and conform to the inward and new man, and not rebel and obstruct the operations of faith, as it is naturally inclined to do, if not restrained. For the inward man, being created after the image of God, by faith rejoices through Christ, in whom he possesses so great treasure; and hence his only employment and delight are to serve God freely in love.”

He elucidates the second axiom by describing the secret reflections of a truly humble Christian. “Behold; on me, a miserable mortal and worthy of condemnation, God, of his mere pity and kindness, without the least merit on my part, hath bestowed all the riches of his righteousness and salvation, so that I no more stand in need of any thing except faith, by which I may appropriate and secure these blessings. To such a Father, who overwhelms me with his inestimable loving kindness, must I not liberally, cheerfully, and with my whole heart do every thing which I shall know to be pleasing in his

* 1 Cor. ix. 19; vii. 22.

sight? I therefore, after the example of Christ, and as far as I am capable of imitating him, would give up myself to my neighbour, as Christ hath given up himself for me; I am determined to do nothing in this life, except what I shall see to be conducive to his interests, since by faith I myself abound in all blessings through Christ."

He proceeds to state, that papal, episcopal, monastic, ecclesiastical, and political mandates, ought to be obeyed in many instances, from a regard to the express will of God; in others, from a sense of the expediency of the injunctions; and again in others, from a principle of pure benevolence, which, in imitation of our Lord, performs and endures many things not in their own nature necessary, for the sake of peace and order, and that offence may not be given to our fellow-creatures.

There were some, he said, who would vitiate the very best doctrines, and the very best discourses, by misunderstanding them. Let such persons try if they could understand the few words he was about to say. "Many impure characters, when they hear of this liberty of the gospel, use it for an occasion to the flesh, and form no other idea of Christian freedom than an exemption from all rules and ordinances. They greedily lay hold of this exemption, and pay no regard to things, which relate essentially to the Christian religion.—Let us hearken to the Scripture, and turn not from it to the right hand, or to the left.* By that unerring guide it appears, that as no man is justified by his attention to works and ritual observances, so neither is he justified by the neglect and contempt of them. The faith of Christ does not free us from the necessity of performing good works, but from the presumption of seeking justification by them. Rules and precepts are necessary to be observed in human life. Impetuous and inexperienced youth must be disciplined by useful labour, and the body must be brought into subjection by these means. A prudent and faithful minister of Christ will instruct his people in these things, but in so guarded a manner, as to prevent, so far as in him lies, the prevalence of a self-righteous spirit. For this is easily introduced, unless faith be constantly inculcated. If faith be kept out of sight, and human constitutions alone be taught, pestilent and impious traditions, which ruin the soul, will bear all the sway in the Church, as is

* Galatians v.

at present the case of the Christian world; pontiffs and schoolmen will confound the minds of men by their decrees and sentences: and an infinite number of souls will be dragged into perdition; so that Antichrist will appear indeed in all his horrors."

Luther had repeatedly expressed a wish that he might have leisure to attend to useful subjects, and not be continually diverted from them by polemical disputes. In the treatise, of which the substance of some remarkable passages has been laid before the reader, he seems to have given a specimen of what he conceived to be salutary, practical doctrine: and, though he cannot as yet be supposed to have arrived at perfect accuracy in his views of the gospel, every intelligent student of divinity will see the lineaments of true Christianity. The subjects, which he treats, are in their own nature mysterious; and by no means agreeable to the prejudices of human nature in its present state. EVANGELICAL TRUTH itself appears to stand between two precipices, equally destructive, Self-righteousness and Antinomianism. To describe it in such a manner as to leave it liable to neither of these imputations, is no easy matter. Even those who, by sound experience, are practical adepts in the gospel-mystery, are not always happy in conveying wholesome instruction to others. Language itself is apt to sink under the weight of the real doctrines of grace, and proves unequal to the description of that spiritual understanding which furnishes the CHRISTIAN HEART with conceptions peculiarly scriptural. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that the man, who, after a silence of many centuries, first undertook to arrange and methodize the doctrines of the gospel according to the principles of the New Testament, should not always be able to do full justice to his subject? In explaining however the principles of Christian liberty, and in guarding them against evils and abuses on the right hand and the left, he seems, on the whole, to have preserved the due medium; and it is a marvellous instance of divine goodness, that the first completely evangelical reformer could unite such uncommon vehemence of spirit with so much good sense, and such great nicety of judicious discrimination.

From these extracts and quotations we also see how far remote the author was from being a mere turbulent,

licentious demagogue. Convinced as he now was, that the bishop of Rome had no divine jurisdiction, still he so far revered the providence of God in permitting this system to continue for ages among mankind, that he was willing to try, whether scriptural truths might not be taught and supported in the Christian world without the convulsion of a complete separation. Nor were his suspicions of the entirely antichristian nature of the popedom confirmed, till he found by experience that an evangelical ministry **COULD NOT** subsist under so corrupt a hierarchy.

The Romish writer, Maimbourg, gives the following account of the *Treatise on Christian Liberty*. "Luther sent it to the pope for the purpose of insulting him. He represents faith as doing every thing. It justifies us, it makes us free, it saves us; and all this without the help of good works, which are of no use towards salvation, even though they proceed from faith."

From Du Pin, who, of all the papal advocates, is in general by far the most candid, and the most to be relied on, one might have expected a more ingenuous and instructive criticism, especially on a work which lays aside all speculative disquisition, and treats only of the essential doctrines of the gospel, and the way in which every individual sinner must seek eternal salvation. Though sufficiently prolix in other matters, he gives but a sentence or two respecting this treatise. "It is," says he, "full of pious maxims, but he maintains in it his **ERROR** of justification by faith alone. Yet, he tells us, he does not reject good works, but, on the contrary, exhorts men to the practice of them; but he condemns those who do them with an opinion to be justified by them, and is persuaded that they make no man just." . . .

The pious Christian will have no difficulty in determining **WHERE**, in these instances, the charge of error and misrepresentation ought to rest, though he may, perhaps, be a little surprised to see, that in former, as well as in modern times, the leading truths of the gospel, in spite of every care to interpret them clearly, and guard them from erroneous construction, were opposed, misunderstood, and misrepresented. The fact is, men, in all ages and under all circumstances, naturally dislike the pure doctrines of grace; they are ignorant of God's righteousness; they

go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.* It was, I conceive, a strong conviction of this natural dislike, which induced the author of the treatise we have now reviewed, to put his readers, at the conclusion, in mind of the important truth,—namely,

“ That there was therefore need of PRAYER to God, that he would be pleased to incline us towards himself and make us teachable, and write his laws in our hearts, according to his promise; otherwise we are ruined for ever. For unless he himself inwardly teach us this wisdom, which is so hidden in mystery, mere nature will constantly disapprove it and reject it. The reason is, nature looks on it as foolishness, and takes offence at it.”—This is a most valuable observation of Luther. He had his eye on the great, essential, doctrine of justification by faith, which was always his favourite theme. He had taken peculiar pains to secure it both from abuse and from misconception. It was only a little before, that he had said, “ We are so far from rejecting good works, that we teach the necessity of them, and lay very great stress on their being done. We never say any thing against them on their own account; it is the impious notion that they can justify, which we condemn.” Still he well knew, that nothing he could say would be effectual to reach the hearts, or even the understandings of mankind. Still they would infallibly exclaim, “ This is a dangerous tenet, this is faith without works.” He therefore wisely admonishes us to pray for a divine influence; and he beseeches God to “ show the light of his countenance, that HIS way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations.”

If the least doubt could be entertained, whether the Saxon reformer was a man both of acute understanding, and indefatigable industry, it would be easy to particularize several of his excellent publications, during the years 1519, &c. which have not been mentioned. The established hierarchy had, as it could not fail to have, many supporters. The so called heretical innovator was attacked from all quarters; and it may be sufficient to add, that Luther always answered his enemies with perspicuity and vigour, and in several instances with great brilliancy of

* Rom. x. 3.

wit and poignant sarcasm : never was it more truly said of any man, **THAT HE WAS HIMSELF A HOST.**

Doubtless this extraordinary servant of God is the object of our admiration, much more than of our pity ; nevertheless, when I view the champion of that Christian liberty which we at this day enjoy, calumniated, irritated, and provoked, hunted down, and almost struggling for his life, it is with vast satisfaction that I find the eloquent pen of Melancthon begins about this time to appear, in reply to some of Luther's adversaries. With what spirit he was treading in the steps of his academical friend, may in some measure be inferred from his answer to a declamatory composition which was published at Leipsic under the name of Thomas Radin. A short extract must however suffice ; for important materials crowd upon us. "The very terms, grace, faith, hope, and charity, have an entirely different meaning in the Scriptures, from **THAT** which fashionable divines give them in their scholastic discussions. We have not only lost the doctrine, but even the very language of Christianity. **GRACE** is a word, which denotes **SOME GIFT** of God through Christ ; but where does it signify, as they interpret it, **A FORM OF SOUL ?*** Or whence came the terms of **FAITH INFUSED** and **ACQUIRED ; FORMED** and **UNFORMED ?** Where is their authority for teaching, that Christian minds should hope for salvation from human merits ? Nay, whence is the origin of the term itself, the profane term of **MERIT ?** Witness this madness of attributing virtue to human endeavours rather than to the work of the Divine Spirit ? The Church, ye princes ! appeals to your faith and piety : she entreats you, enslaved as she is by philosophy and human traditions, to emancipate her at length from her two-fold Babylonian servitude." Melancthon then makes heavy complaints of the vices tolerated in the universities, and the corruptions there imbibed by youth. "I have seen," says he, "some young men, not ill-disposed, who would have wished to live and die in total ignorance of letters, rather than to have purchased knowledge at so dear a rate, who carried nothing away with them from the universities, except a guilty conscience."

If the conduct of Frederic the **WISE** had been influenced only by prudential and political considerations, he may seem to have been sufficiently tempted, about this period,

* This is a most important distinction.

to have entirely withdrawn his protection from Luther. He was informed by Valentine Deitleben, who was then his agent at Rome for the management of some particular business,—That he could bring nothing to a successful issue with the Roman pontiff; That whatever the pretence might be, he believed the real obstacles were, the offence which the new doctrines of Luther had given to the pope and his cardinals, and the public report of the encouragement and assistance which Luther himself had received from the prince.

The answer of the elector is, in substance, as follows. “We never undertook to defend or patronize the opinions or writings of Luther; nor have we at this moment any such intention. We do not consider it as our business to pronounce what is right, or wrong, on religious subjects: nevertheless, we will not dissemble, that we hear the tenets of THIS MAN are approved by many learned and intelligent persons. Some time ago we so far interfered, as to obtain from him a voluntary promise that he would leave our university and jurisdiction; which he would certainly have done, had not C. Miltitz, the pope’s own nuncio, entreated us in the most earnest manner not to permit him to go away; for he expressed his fears, lest, in a different situation, where the man was not restrained by our authority, he might proceed to greater lengths.

“As, therefore, there is not the smallest ground for suspecting us to be ill affected to the Roman see, we trust that our affairs will not meet with any obstruction from his holiness, on account of false charges and insinuations.

“To you however we may speak without disguise. It is the common conversation here, that Martin Luther was drawn into this dispute about the pope’s supremacy by doctor Eckius, and that he has been so repeatedly provoked by abusive publications, at Rome and other places, that he found himself compelled to answer them. Moreover, as there are now in Germany abundance of ingenious and learned persons, and as the laity begin to grow skilful and have a desire to understand the Scriptures, there is, in the opinion of many, great reason to fear, that if the pope should continue to reject the equitable proposals of Luther, and will not submit the cause to a fair and unbiassed examination, but depend merely on ecclesiastical censures, the dissensions and contests may be

exceedingly exasperated, and a return to peace and harmony rendered very difficult. The doctrines of Luther have taken deep root every where, and the effect must be done away by perspicuous and incontestable testimonies of SCRIPTURE, not by ecclesiastical processes contrived to oppress him and to excite terror; otherwise, it is most probable that the bitterest animosities, and the most horrible and destructive convulsions will arise in Germany, which can be of no service either to his holiness the pope, or to any one else.”*

This letter, though addressed only to the elector's own agent or commissioner, Deitleben, would doubtless find its way to the pontiff and his cardinals. Happily for the cause of Christian liberty, THESE continued to despise every kind of salutary advice, and it is well known how the subsequent events corresponded with the intimation of the sagacious Frederic.

In effect, Leo X. listened to the advice of his most pernicious counsellors, and at length, as we shall soon see, suffered himself to be overcome by their importunity. Among these we may reckon Sylvester Prierias and Cajetan, and especially Eckius, who, from the time of his defeat, in the disputation at Leipsic, breathed nothing but fury and resentment against Luther, and, without losing a moment, had repaired to Rome, in the full purpose of executing vengeance on the man who had lowered his pride and checked his ambitious expectations. Instead of profiting by the prudent suggestions of Frederic, which were conveyed to the court of Rome, through Deitleben, in language sufficiently respectful, though, at the same time, firm and significant, the pontiff affected to understand the elector's letter of instruction to his agent in a sense directly opposite to the real one. He extolled that prince in the highest terms of commendation for having opposed the wicked attempts of Martin Luther with so much piety and zeal; he suppressed his knowledge of any protection that had been afforded the heretic by the court of Saxony; and, with incredible effrontery and dissimulation, he desired the elector to be assured that his spirited conduct on the present emergency, in resisting innovation and supporting the orthodox faith, had very much increased that good opinion which the Roman see had always entertained of his distinguished merit. In the

* Luth. Op. vol. ii. p. 49.

same letter Leo declares, that he had received from the very best characters so many testimonies in praise of Frederic, as made it hard for him to say whether the wisdom or the religion of the prince had lately been more conspicuous. It was a proof of singular wisdom that he had given no countenance to that pestilential, poisonous madman, who was reviving the seditious heresies of the Wickliffites and Hussites, which had already been condemned by the general church ; but it was the soundness of his religious principles which only could account for his steady adherence to the orthodox faith.

The pope concludes with informing the elector, that he had sent him a copy of the determination* of the court of Rome respecting this notorious heretic and his detestable opinions ; and that he now relied upon his highness, in the first place, to exhort Luther to recant with a becoming humility ; and secondly, if the man persisted in his wickedness beyond the term of sixty days, to seize his person and keep him safe for the disposal of his holiness.

This and the preceding letter are curious specimens of that species of epistolary correspondence, which frequently takes place among persons in elevated situations, where the writers perfectly understand each other, though they by no means express in words the ideas they intend to communicate. The letter of Frederic, which, though addressed to his agent at Rome, we may consider as designed for the pope himself, displays throughout both the extraordinary sagacity and the manly resolution which characterised that great prince ; while the pope's answer, under the disguise of a disgusting flattery, betrays the most presumptuous and arbitrary designs. Frederic, though his expressions are modified with a courtly dexterity, and with that obsequiousness to the hierarchy in which he was educated, breathes nothing but sincerity, moderation, and peace : whereas Leo X., even in his condescension, is insolent ; and by his ridiculous inconsistency in praising the elector, and at the same time adopting violent counsels, demonstrates both the ignorance and the temerity of his advisers. The intelligent reader, who is accustomed to exercise his own understanding on the

* This was the pope's bull in which Luther was condemned. An account of it, and its consequences, will be given in the next chapter.

facts before him, will, by attentively weighing these two letters, see more into the real state of the Reformation and the character of the elector of Saxony and of the Roman court, than by reading many pages of historical speculation and conjecture. But,

Let us now hear the sentiments of one who neither loved courts nor practised their arts.—When Luther was informed by Spalatinus that the prince's agent at Rome could transact no business with the pope, because his holiness was offended on account of the protection afforded by the elector to so notorious a heretic, his answer was in substance as follows, and well deserves our notice. “It is entirely agreeable to my wishes that our illustrious prince should separate himself from my cause as he has hitherto done, and expose me to the public, either to be instructed or convicted of error. Let them punish Sylvester, Eckius, Cajetan, and others, who have raised these disturbances in the church, merely to enhance their own consequence and reputation. Whatever I have done, or now do, I do by compulsion. I am always ready to be quiet, provided they do not insist upon evangelical truth lying dormant. If they will but permit Christians to walk in the path of salvation without persecution, I will give up every thing else; and that spontaneously. This is all I ask. What can be more equitable? I ask not for a cardinal's hat, nor for gold, nor whatever at this day is deemed precious at Rome.—You will observe that a mind thus disposed can neither fear threats nor be allured by promises.”*

However, amidst the various distresses which the attacks of persecutors on all sides occasioned, several circumstances took place about the beginning of the year 1520, which tended greatly to encourage the Saxon reformer. 1. The appearance of Melancthon against the papal advocates has already been mentioned. 2. Several elaborate epistles of Erasmus, written about the same period, to persons of learning and eminence, represent Luther in the most respectful terms. Some of these are already, in substance, before the reader,† who cannot fail to observe, that they must have proved the more serviceable to the cause of the Reformation, because, as Luther himself says, Erasmus, with his usual dexterity, did not seem to take his part, and yet, in fact, defended him in

* Lib. i. Epist.

† See page 273.

the very ablest manner.* 3. Some German noblemen, who had imbibed Lutheran principles, and had heard of the dangers to which, from the violent machinations of bigoted Roman catholics, the reformer's life was exposed, stepped forward at this crisis, and generously offered him their protection. Among these, in particular, is recorded the name of Sylvester Schaumburg, a Franconian knight, who sent his son to Wittemberg, to be instructed by Melancthon; and, at the same time, by a letter, most earnestly requested Luther to accept an asylum in his neighbourhood, where he might be preserved from all harm, by Schaumburg himself and a hundred other noblemen, till the storm was over, and the doctrinal points had undergone a legal examination. Luther had the prudence to transmit to his friend Spalatinus the knight's letter for the inspection of the elector; and along with it a very significant note, which shows how much his hopes and confidence were improved upon receiving information that he had so many friends in Germany. "If it would not," says he, "give the prince too much trouble, I could wish he would be pleased to give a hint to his friend, cardinal St. George, at Rome, respecting the contents of the enclosed letter from sir Sylvester Schaumburg, that my enemies may see they will only make bad worse by driving me from Wittemberg; for there are those, not in Bohemia, but in the middle of Germany, who both can and will protect me against all their ecclesiastical thunders. THERE, most certainly, I should expose the Roman errors and abuses with greater severity than I have thought it prudent to do at Wittemberg, where the authority of the prince and the interests of the university are some restraint to my proceedings. As far as respects myself, the die is cast.—Papal wrath and papal favour are equally despised by me. I no longer wish to communicate with the Romanists, or to be reconciled to them. Let them condemn me and burn my books; and if, in return, I do not publicly condemn and burn the whole mass of pontifical law, it will be because I cannot find fire. They will not succeed in this contest. The Lord, who knows me to be a most grievous sinner, will, I doubt not, finish his own work, either through me as his instrument, or through another."

It is scarcely necessary to mention, that the Saxon reformer, when he wrote this note, had made up his mind

* Lib. i. Epist. 143.

respecting an accommodation with the court of Rome. In various ways he received almost daily information of their violent proceedings against his doctrines, his writings, and his person;* he soon expected to hear of a cruel and unjust sentence; and it behoved him to make some provision for his safety. Under these circumstances, the generous proposal of protection by Schaumburg and his associates must have been grateful news; and though Divine Providence directed his valuable life to be preserved in a different manner, yet the certain knowledge of having so many powerful friends in the heart of Germany, together with the pleasing option of taking shelter among them in case of emergency, produced a most visible and decisive effect on his mind. We may judge of this by comparing the spirit of the preceding short letter to Spalatinus with that of the following, which was written to the same friend, just before the kind intentions and voluntary support of the German noblemen were made known to him. Alluding to the bitter accusations of the Romanists, he expresses himself to the following effect: "You know that I have much more right to complain than they. Proofs of this assertion may be found in my little publications; in which I so often own and complain, that I am dragged into this contest by force. How frequently have I proposed peace and silence. Nay, when do I cease to beg for better information? My disposition is still the same; still I am ready to be silent, if I may be permitted to be so; that is, if my enemies shall also be restrained from attacking me. All the world knows that Eckius drew me into the dispute about the pope's supremacy, for no other reason but to injure my person, and all my concerns, and expose to ridicule both my reputation and our university at Wittemberg. And now, when they see that the man is providentially opposed, they accuse me of vain-glory. How is it that a person so low and miserable as I am should be suspected of a passion for glory; I, who ask for nothing more but that I may be suffered to live in private, altogether unknown to the world? Let those, who please, succeed me in my functions; let those, who please, burn my books. What can I say more? However, I desire that one thing may be taken along with what I here say, namely, that if I may not be released from the office of teaching and explaining

* Du Pin, book ii. chap. ix.

the word of God, most assuredly I will not be fettered in the discharge of my ministry, I am already sufficiently burdened with my sins ; I mean not to add to them the unpardonable crime of remaining in the ministry, and of being unfaithful in it, of being guilty of an impious silence, and of the neglect of divine truth and of so many thousand precious souls."

Such appears to have been the pious and truly benevolent determination of the man, whom one of our historians, with most deplorable prejudice, in direct opposition to the facts, accuses of indulging a spirit of selfish resentment, when he began to oppose the practice of indulgences.*

Whoever reflects on the state of ecclesiastical affairs in the latter part of the year 1520, and the former part of 1521, the important crisis which was fast approaching, the wise and resolute conduct of Martin Luther, and the glorious and happy consequences of his opposition to the reigning corruptions, will look on these authentic documents as extremely interesting, and well deserving the notice of every pious and grateful protestant. It is indeed much to be lamented that these, and many other instructive particulars contained in this chapter, have not, as yet, found their way into regular ecclesiastical histories, where they might prove, in some degree, an antidote to the pert and positive assertions of profane and infidel authors, who set no bounds to their misrepresentations of religious characters and religious transactions.†

* Hume, Henry VIII.

† Thus Mr. Hume, besides his odious misrepresentation respecting INDULGENCES, which has long ago received a most complete answer from Dr. Maclaine in his notes on Mosheim, makes not the least scruple to speak of the Reformation in the following manner :

"Not that reason bore any considerable share in opening men's eyes with regard to the impostures of the Romish church."

Again, "Many of the reformers adopted an enthusiastic strain of devotion, which admitted of no observances, rites, or ceremonies, but placed all merit in a mysterious species of faith, in inward vision, rapture, and ecstasy."

Soon after, he speaks of Leo X. as follows : His "sound JUDGMENT, MODERATION, and TEMPER, were well qualified to retard its progress ;" that is, the progress of the sect of reformers.

I will venture to affirm, that it will not be easy to produce, from any other writer of tolerable reputation, assertions that have so little foundation in fact as these.

CHAP. VI.

THE PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION, TILL THE CONCLUSION OF THE DIET OF WORMS.

LUTHER'S TREATISE *on the* BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY.

HE IS CONDEMNED BY THE BULL OF LEO X.

THE ELECTOR'S INTERVIEW AT COLOGNE WITH ALEXANDER.

THE ELECTOR'S INTERVIEW ALSO WITH ERASMUS.

DEFENCES OF LUTHER.

THE ASPERITY OF HIS STYLE.

HE BURNS THE POPE'S BULL.

ELECTION OF CHARLES V.

LUTHER'S COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

DIET OF WORMS.

THE active spirit of Luther was continually engaged in the investigation of evangelical truth. Hearing of the design of the court of Rome to publish his condemnation, and discovering more and more of the abuses of popery, he found himself compelled to proceed in his opposition to its established system. He saw no possibility of retreating with a safe conscience; all his offers of peace and reconciliation were rejected with contempt and disdain; and his bitterest enemies were countenanced and applauded by the pontiff. He determined, therefore, to do his utmost to open the eyes of all ranks and orders of men respecting the abominable practices of the Roman hierarchy.

Accordingly, about the middle of the year 1520, he published, in his native language, a little treatise, in which he addressed the emperor and German nobility. His own description of it is concise and significant: "My little tract," says he, "against the popedom, is now before the public. The subject is, the necessity of a reformation in the church. It will give great offence at Rome, because it exposes the impious arts and violent abuses of the pontifical power."

In this work Luther collects a history of the numerous corruptions which, for many ages, had crept into the church; and in particular he describes the miseries which Germany had suffered from the various wars that had been raised against the emperors by intriguing and ambitious pontiffs, for the purpose of increasing their wealth and power. He denies the authority of the pope in interpreting Scripture, since he was fallible as well as other men; and asserts, that the CIVIL, and not the ecclesiastical, governors possessed the right of convening general councils. He exhorts the whole nation to make a STAND against the pope's encroachments; he lays open the scandalous manners and practices of the court of Rome; and describes the cardinals as a company of useless men, who disgraced the clerical profession by their vices, and drained the riches of Italy and Germany.

This treatise comprehends likewise a selection of distinct articles concerning the reformation of ecclesiastical affairs, the encouragement of useful seminaries of learning, and the study of theology. The primary object of theology, he said, ought to be the interpretation and understanding of the sacred Scriptures; and the public schools should attend to the pious education of young persons of both sexes; and the extirpation, or at least the correction, of various pernicious customs, which antiquity itself had now rendered venerable in the Christian world. Still he declared, that he did not reject the authority of the pontiff, provided it was regulated by wholesome laws. He recommends most particular care to be taken in the choice of the college of cardinals, that that body may consist of pious and skilful persons; and he thinks their number should be confined to twelve.

Thus by a persevering opposition, equally firm and prudent, the Saxon reformer gradually subverted the foundations of popery; and Germany saw with admiration the display of a profound, practical knowledge in ecclesiastical subjects, from a person whose hours had chiefly been spent in the schools and in the monastery. Some, however, there were, and those the friends of Luther, who were startled at the boldness of the publication, and considered it as the signal for war; but the more thinking and judicious part of mankind looked on this measure as the wisest step which, even in a mere worldly and prudential light, could possibly have been taken, to render

contemptible and abortive the expected fulminations of the Roman court.

In the autumn of the same year our industrious reformer printed a small treatise concerning the Babylonish captivity of the church. He begins this book with an ingenuous acknowledgment, that he now most sincerely repented of the concessions he had made two years ago respecting the nature of **INDULGENCES**. He was so constantly exercised, he said, in disputes and contentions, that whether he would or would not, he was compelled to become daily more and more learned. He could not, at that time, think of rejecting indulgences entirely, so general was the consent of mankind in their favour, and so addicted was he himself to the superstitions of Romish tyranny. But he now understood them to be mere impostures, originating in iniquitous flattery. Their object was to rob men of their money, and to pervert the faith of the gospel. He heartily wished he could persuade the booksellers, and all others, to commit to the flames every line that he had written on that subject, and to substitute in their place this proposition,—**INDULGENCES ARE THE WICKED CONTRIVANCES OF ROMISH FLATTERERS.***

It is in this animated composition that Luther, for the first time, I think, calls the papacy **THE KINGDOM OF BABYLON**. The progress of his sentiments was in perfect unison with the natural motions of the human mind, attending to the dictates of conscience, and directed by serious reflection. It was altogether agreeable to right reason, that he, who had for some time suspected the papacy to be antichristian on account of its multiplied enormities, should at length firmly believe it to be so, when it reformed no abuses, acknowledged no mistakes, and exhibited no ecclesiastical authority but in persecuting those who endeavoured to promote the good of the church of Christ.

Notwithstanding the generous and seasonable protection which had lately been offered to Luther by the German nobility, his real situation at this time was sufficiently perilous to have filled any other person with the most uneasy apprehensions. His artful, bitter, and chagrined adversary, Eckius, had gone to Rome, for the express purpose of soliciting the papal censures against him. He knew the man's pride and boundless ambition, his per-

* Luth. Op. vol. ii.

severing industry, his implacable resentment. The bull of Leo X., which was to put an end to the dissensions in the church, and perhaps to the existence of the reformer, was daily expected in Germany; and Luther might well doubt whether the cautious elector would not shrink from the danger of hazarding an open rupture with the Roman see, whose enormous power had already crushed some of the most potent German emperors. He had indeed good reason to believe that Frederic was his disciple from conviction, as well as his protector from policy; but that excellent prince might not be able to support him in an avowed contest of force, though by prudential and dexterous management he had hitherto shielded him from mischief. In this state of suspense and peril, it was impossible for Luther to remain unconcerned; yet he discovered no symptoms either of timidity or remissness. He continued to vindicate his own conduct and opinions with spirit, and to inveigh against those of his adversaries with vehemence.

From the epistolary correspondence of Spalatinus about the end of the year 1520, we have an opportunity of learning the exact state of Luther's mind, after he had received certain intelligence of the arrival of his condemnation from Rome. Spalatinus had been sent by the elector to examine the condition of the university of Wittenberg, and also to ask Luther what steps he intended to take respecting the pope's bull. "I found him," says he, "altogether cheerful, and even in high spirits. He is determined to write against the bull, but with moderation, for the elector's sake. He has resolved, as soon as he hears of the burning of his own books, to treat the pontifical decrees in the same way. I have seen more than thirty letters addressed to Luther from Suevia, Helvetia, and Pomerania. They are written by princes and persons distinguished by rank and learning, and are, all of them, full of pious and consolatory reflections. Though two hundred students are said to have left the university, the danger of the plague was the chief reason of their departure. Moreover, the principal part of them remain, and new ones are daily coming in crowds; insomuch that I myself have seen six hundred scholars attend the lectures of Melancthon, and four hundred those of Luther. Lastly, neither the parish church, nor that of the monastery, is

large enough to contain the multitudes who flock to hear the sermons of Luther."

After the court of Rome had hesitated almost three years, during all which time THE WORD OF GOD HAD GROWN AND MULTIPLIED, it was on the fifteenth of June, one thousand five hundred and twenty, that Leo X. published that famous damnatory BULL against Luther, which in the event proved so fatal to the established hierarchy. Forty-one propositions extracted out of Luther's works are therein condemned as heretical, scandalous, and offensive to pious ears; all persons are forbidden to read his writings, upon pain of excommunication: such as had any of them in their custody, are commanded to burn them; and he himself, if he did not, within sixty days, send or bring his retractation in form to Rome, is pronounced an obstinate heretic, is excommunicated, and delivered unto Satan for the destruction of his flesh; and all secular princes are required, under pain of incurring the same censures, and of forfeiting all their dignities, to seize his person, that he might be punished as his crimes deserved.*

There was a time when the most powerful monarchs would have trembled at such a sentence. That time was now gone by; and though Eckius and his party triumphed, as if by one decisive blow they had at length annihilated Lutheranism, the more judicious and dispassionate part of mankind beheld this rash step of the Roman court as the certain prognostic of increased tumults and distractions.

The bull met with different kinds of reception in different parts of Germany. In some places the publication of it was delayed, in others eluded in part; and so odious were the proceedings of the court of Rome in this business, that fear alone dictated to many a reluctant and partial obedience to its mandates. For some time past the followers of Luther had been gradually learning to treat ecclesiastical anathemas with little respect:† and, on this occasion, they read them with the most lively indignation. Even at Leipsic, Eckius experienced a very violent opposition to the promulgation of the bull; and at Erfurt it was forcibly wrested from him, torn to pieces, and

* Luth. Op. ii. Wit. Palavic. 27. † Luth. Op. i.

thrown into the river by armed academicians, who assembled together and besieged his house for that purpose.

Spalatinus has informed us how little intimidated or disconcerted he found his friend Luther on the arrival of the bull; but, it should seem, that some weeks before their interview, Luther knew the long-expected event had actually taken place. We collect this from one of his letters to Spalatinus, dated October the thirteenth, 1520; an extract of which we shall lay before the reader, who will, doubtless, be gratified to see his very first thoughts and resolutions on this memorable occasion. "At last the Roman bull is come; and Eckius is the bearer of it. I treat it with contempt. I consider it in all respects as a machination of Eckius, and I attack it as impious and false. You see, that the express doctrines of Christ himself are here condemned; no cause assigned why I should be deemed a heretic; and, lastly, I am called, not to a hearing, but to a retractation. I shall however, as yet, not seem to know that it is a papal bull, but treat it as a fiction and forgery. Oh! how I wish that the emperor Charles V. would act like a man; and in behalf of Christ oppose the emissaries of Satan. On my own account I have no fear. Let the will of the Lord be done. Neither do I see what steps the prince should take; perhaps, a silent connivance is his truest wisdom. Every where, even at Leipsic, I understand that both the bull and Eckius are extremely despised; so that I almost suspect it will, of itself, come to nothing, if we ourselves do not procure it importance, by discovering too great an anxiety. I send you a true copy of the bull, that you may see what these Romans are. If they prevail, there is an end of the Church, and of the faith of the gospel. From the bottom of my heart I rejoice that I suffer this persecution in the best of causes; though I am not worthy to undergo tribulation in so holy a conflict. I feel myself now more at liberty, being assured that the popedom is antichristian, and the seat of Satan. My only prayer is, that God may preserve his own people from the impious seductions of Romish adherents. Erasmus writes, that the emperor's court overflows with beggars and dependants, all disposed to promote tyrannical principles, so that there is no hope in Charles. No

wonder ! 'Trust not in princes, or in any child of man, for there is no help in them.'*

Historians, on both sides the question, censure without mercy the imprudent conduct of the Roman court in almost all their transactions with Luther. Moreover, they also suggest ingenious plans of different kinds,† by which, if the papal counsels had been steadily directed, they suppose all opposition to the reigning ecclesiastical powers might have been crushed in the bud. The pious reader, however, while he reflects with astonishment on the presumptuous folly and blind infatuation of the Roman hierarchy, will take care always to keep a reverential eye on the overruling hand of Providence, which, for the wickedness of men, often shuts their eyes that they cannot see, and makes their ears heavy that they cannot hear.‡ If this important caution, so constantly enjoined in Scripture, be totally neglected, or but carelessly regarded, the study of history, otherwise so beneficial an employment, may easily obtain a malignant influence over both the understanding and the affections. An habitual attention to SECONDARY CAUSES, where the mind has not obtained, from Divine revelation, any true knowledge of the FIRST GRAND CAUSE, nor been duly humbled on account of internal depravity, has been observed, in many instances, sadly to increase a sceptical, profane, and atheistical way of thinking. On the contrary, when the God of the Scriptures is the God in whom we firmly believe and humbly trust, and whose attributes we expect to see displayed in his government of the world; we then derive useful lessons of instruction from the contemplation of almost every event, which either we ourselves diligently observe, or which is faithfully recorded by human industry. In effect, the RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE is the KEY to true wisdom, and to true happiness ; the door of BOTH is shut to the profane unbeliever.

The reformer's cause from the beginning was the cause of God and his Christ ; and the Roman see had well nigh filled up the measure of its iniquity. On the supposition of any other principle but a judicial hardening of the heart through Divine vengeance, the strange infatuation of Leo X. seems altogether unaccountable. Most certainly he was extremely anxious to have the bull of

* *Seck. 114.*† *Robertson, Charles V.*‡ *Isaiah, vi. 10.*

Luther's condemnation well received among the nations : but MARK the means which that pontiff, so celebrated for penetration and dexterity, employed to bring about so important a purpose.

1. The bull itself was ill calculated either to convince or to silence. The holy Scriptures had begun to be read in Germany. To these Luther constantly appealed, and to nothing else. By these he repeatedly requested that his doctrines might be tried. The elector Frederic had intimated to the pope, with sufficient clearness, how dangerous it would be, in the business of Luther, to neglect the testimony of Scripture, and to rely merely on ecclesiastical censures. Leo, however, stimulated by Eckius, and other interested ecclesiastics, would listen to nothing that was healing or pacific. Instead of confuting the doctrines of Luther and exposing his heresies by scriptural arguments, he invokes Jesus Christ, St. Peter, St. Paul, and all the saints of heaven, and in the most pompous and unmeaning language entreats them to preserve the purity of the sacred church. He then declares that his cardinals, and his generals of the regular orders, with other divines and doctors of law, had agreed with him in condemning and rejecting forty-one propositions of Luther, and in pronouncing them false, heretical, and scandalous. But, as father Paul observes,* not a word was said by which men could infer, which were heretical, which false, and which scandalous ; and thus matters were left in greater doubt than before the publication of the bull. This was not to appease, but to exasperate the discontents of the Germans ; who thought it an extraordinary proceeding, that nice questions relative to faith and discipline should be decided at Rome by courtiers only, without the concurrence and advice of other bishops and learned persons, and especially the universities of Europe. —Considerations of this kind showed the necessity of that general council to which Luther had appealed soon after the conferences at Augsburg.

2. The wisest and best part of the Roman catholics themselves acknowledge the culpable imprudence of Leo in this violent proceeding against Luther. But besides the offensive contents of the bull, it was brought into Germany by Eckius himself, the avowed enemy of the reformer and his friends. A step more indiscreet than

* Council of Trent.

this, or more inflammatory in its tendency, could scarcely have been devised. Even the popish advocate Pallavicini owns, that the court of Rome did not herein act wisely, and “that it would have been more convenient to have made use of some other person, because it provoked Luther, and made him regard the execution of the pope’s bull not as a just punishment received from the hands of the executioner, but as a smart blow given him by his mortal enemy.” Eckius all the while pretended to be an involuntary agent in the business, alleging, that only the cause of religion could have induced him to submit to so much labour and expense. One of his private letters, however, sent from Rome, happened to fall into Luther’s hands; who instantly published its contents, and at the same time made pertinent remarks on the hypocritical and interested motives of the writer, which were completely laid open by this accident. In fact, the credit of Eckius in Saxony was now at the lowest ebb. He sent a copy of the bull to the university of Wittemberg, and entreated them to be obedient to the papal injunctions; but that learned body paid no other regard to his solicitations, than to inform the elector of the circumstances, and to intimate to that wise prince, that as Eckius had not ventured to bring the bull himself, they suspected he had been guilty of some unfair practices in the business.

These sentiments of the academicians of Wittemberg were communicated in writing to the elector by Peter Bucard, at that time rector of the university; and as no answer is known to have been returned, it is most probable that Frederic, satisfied with the favourable disposition of his university towards Luther, left them to the direction of their own judgment in this delicate affair.

3. Among the unwise measures at this time adopted by the Roman court, for the purpose of securing a good reception throughout Germany to the sentence of Luther’s condemnation, may justly be reckoned the vain attempts which they made to influence the elector of Saxony and obtain his concurrence in publishing the pope’s bull. Nothing could be worse calculated to effect this design, than the letter which Leo himself sent to Frederic on that occasion. A weak, unprincipled character might easily have been seduced from the path of duty by the insincere, adulatory expressions of the pontiff. But the firm, penetrating, conscientious mind of the elector of Saxony was

more than a match for Leo and all his profligate advisers. This excellent prince despised their flattery as he detested their hypocrisy ; and, though by nature and habit uncommonly cautious and temperate, he appears to have been so much provoked by their unjust and barbarous treatment of his favourite Luther, as to discover unequivocal marks of dissatisfaction and resentment. Matters were now come to a crisis. Either the hero of the reformation was to be abandoned to the rage and malice of his enemies, or the decisions of an iniquitous and despotic hierarchy must be withstood with vigour and resolution. The honest side of this alternative might be attended with danger ; but happily for the cause of Christian liberty, Frederic feared God, increased in the knowledge of true religion, and grew bolder in its support.

Thus, neither in the subject-matter of the bull, nor in the choice of Eckius as nuncio for the publication of it in Germany, nor, lastly, in the pope's epistolary solicitation of the elector's concurrence, did the Roman court display the smallest portion of wisdom or foresight. And it is to the same sort of infatuation continuing to pervade their counsels, that we are to ascribe the rash and insolent demands which they directed Aleander* to make from the elector. This prince was at Cologne, on his return from the coronation of the new emperor Charles V., where Aleander, a man of ability, learning, and eloquence, but of unsound principles and profligate morals, having obtained an audience, opened his commission in the following manner. He said, the pope had intrusted himself and Eckius with the affair of Luther, which was of great consequence to the empire and to the whole Christian world. He did not doubt but the elector would imitate the emperor and the other princes, who had received the pope's determination with respect. In the pope's name he insisted on two things ;—1. That he would cause all Luther's books to be burnt ; and, 2. That he would either put the author of them to death, or imprison him till he should be sent to Rome.

Frederic, after due consideration, and by the advice of his privy counsellors, replied with great prudence, firmness, and spirit. He expressed much surprise, that after the many proofs he had given of piety and obedience, the

* Luther and Erasmus, as well as Seckendorf, describe him as a man of very indifferent character.

pope should make such extraordinary demands. He had been informed, he said, that during his absence from his own dominions, on account of the emperor's coronation. Eckius had brought several of his subjects into trouble and danger; and, that as this was entirely CONTRARY to the intention even of the bull itself, which specified no person whatever but Luther, he left it to the pope's nuncios to judge, how very disgusting such things must be to a prince who had merited a very different treatment. He could not pretend to say, what steps had been taken in his absence by his subjects in general, or by Luther in particular, against these severe proceedings. He believed it possible that vast multitudes of all ranks and orders might adhere to Luther, and favour his appeal. The elector, himself, however, and his brother John, he said, always revered the holy see; and if Luther had done, or said, or written, any thing unworthy of a Christian or a divine, he should meet with no support from his prince. Frederic then put Aleander in mind, that in consequence of a promise from Cajetan, that the differences should be settled in the kindest manner, he had directed Luther to make his appearance before that cardinal at Augsburg: that at the express desire of Miltitz he had retained Luther, who was otherwise on the very point of being dismissed from the university. Moreover, that the archbishop of Treves had been appointed apostolical commissary to try this cause; and that Luther would unquestionably have appeared before him, if he had been properly summoned and had obtained a safe-conduct. "Luther," continued Frederic, "has made many promises, and some credit ought to be given him for the performance. His account of the matter is, that the scurrilous writings of his adversaries have compelled him to take up his pen in his own defence; and that is said to be the judgment also of many learned, many honest, and many pious characters: nevertheless, as far as I am concerned, he must stand on his own merits and his own reputation. Neither the pope nor the emperor have yet made it appear that his books deserve to be burnt: when I am once convinced of that, I will not fail to do every thing that becomes a Christian prince.

"I beg therefore you would no longer persist in these measures; but commit this business to learned, pious, impartial, and disinterested judges, who may meet in a

convenient place, and have the parties before them, with the public faith pledged for their safety. Whenever this supposed heretic shall have been convicted by solid scriptural arguments, the elector of Saxony will be the last person to protect him ; and I must believe that even then his holiness will not require me to do any thing dishonourable.”

After this conversation,* Aleander and Carracciolus† had an interview with the elector’s council, in which they pressed with great earnestness for a compliance with the demands of the pontiff. Carracciolus exclaimed, that Luther had kept none of his promises. Aleander alleged the many and various endeavours of the pope to recall this man from his errors. He said the commission of the archbishop of Treves was at an end. It was a cause in which THE FAITH was concerned, and therefore the pope had very properly taken it into his own hands.

Frederic still persisted in his sentiments: upon which Aleander, anxious to retire with as good a grace as he could, declared, “ that the pope, having no wish to embrue his hands in the blood of Luther, had never designed to proceed against his person ; but that in regard to Carracciolus and himself, he contended they had no choice left to them : they were bound to obey the injunctions of the bull, and, in so doing, to burn the books of Martin Luther.”

It required, however, no little effrontery to make that part of this declaration, which regarded the person of Luther ; for it was in direct contradiction to the demands which the nuncio himself, in the pope’s name, had so recently made, as well as both to the spirit and letter of the bull itself. But it was no part of Aleander’s disposition to be very solicitous respecting honour, veracity, or consistency of conduct. In his eloquent speech to the

* It is in reference to this conversation that Luther says, the elector handled the pope’s nuncios so roughly at Cologne, that they were obliged to leave him with shame and disgrace. And he adds, this prince was a man of exquisite discernment, and knew how to treat the artifices of the Roman court as they deserved. Luth. tom. i.

† Carracciolus was also a nuncio of the pope, who had been sent to the emperor on other business. He was present during Aleander’s conversation with the elector, but does not appear to have interfered. Indeed Aleander was pitched upon for the particular affair of Luther, and was supposed to be eminently qualified for the management of it.

elector, he urged the necessity, which the two nuncios were under, of burning Luther's writings; yet it is certain that, in the conclusion of these conferences at Cologne, he promised that he would suspend the execution of the pontifical sentence in that respect.* In the same harangue, he also represented the new emperor, Charles V., as altogether obedient to the mandates of the pope: whereas the truth is, he repeatedly pressed that monarch to take part against Luther, and to give full effect to the pope's bull; but Charles, whatever might be his real sentiments or wishes, at present thought proper to refuse compliance with the insolent pontifical demands respecting the seizure of Luther's person. In fact, he was then under the greatest obligations to Frederic, being actually indebted to this prince for his recent election to the imperial dignity. Accordingly, he replied to Aleander without hesitation, that he must first hear what the elector of Saxony had to say on the subject, and then he would give his answer to the pope.† In regard to the burning of Luther's writings, he appears at last to have given way to the zeal and solicitations of Aleander, who having so far carried his point with the new emperor, attended him after his coronation from city to city, filling the Netherlands with the smoke and flames of innumerable books and papers, and threatening all ranks and orders with the papal vengeance.‡ A like partial submission to the pope's bull was obtained by Aleander in the ecclesiastical electorates of Cologne and Mentz. The hatred of this furious popish executioner towards Luther was cordial and extreme; and is by no means to be ascribed to bigotry or superstition exclusively. He evidently disliked the man, for the soundness and purity of his morals. He is known to have said, "It is impossible to soften Luther by money. He is a brute, who will not look either at bribes or honours; otherwise, he might long ago have had many thousands paid to him at the bankers by the pope's orders."§

How very different from those of Aleander were the principles which influenced the conduct of the elector of Saxony! The more we know of this good prince, the more are we compelled to admire the integrity and the tenderness of his conscience. — The following curious

* Comment. de Luth. p. 142.

† Luth. vol. ii. p. 117.

‡ Erasm. Letter to Card. Sadoletus.

§ Selneccer, in Seck.

anecdote throws further light on his character, and is at the same time in close connection with our main subject.

A short time after the preceding conferences with Aleander, Frederic sent a pressing message to the celebrated Erasmus, who happened to be then at Cologne, in which he solicited an interview at his own apartments. Erasmus complied with the summons, and was accordingly introduced to his highness. It was in the month of December; Spalatinus also was present; and as the THREE were standing before the fire, a conversation took place, in the course of which the elector earnestly entreated Erasmus to give him his unfeigned opinion of Luther. Erasmus pressed together his lips, and endeavoured to evade the question; but the prince looked at him full in the face, and gravely said, "I would rather the earth should open and swallow me up, than that I should be found favouring any false doctrines. But if Luther has the truth on his side, whatever danger I may run, he shall not reckon me among his adversaries. Neither do I think myself qualified to decide in so important a matter; and for that reason I wish to know the real judgment of wise and learned men concerning the whole controversy." It was on this occasion that Erasmus said ironically, "Luther has committed two great faults; he has touched the pope on the crown, and the monks on the belly." The elector smiled; and was so much impressed with the sarcastic observation, that he mentioned it a little before his death. Erasmus then subjoined, with great seriousness, "That Luther was just in his animadversions on the ecclesiastical abuses; that a reformation of the church was become absolutely necessary; that the reformer's doctrine was true in the main; but that there was a want of mildness in his manner."*

* This account is taken partly from a MS. of Spalatinus, and partly from the Annals of Melancthon. The latter author makes the following very important reflections on the conduct of Frederic in these transactions:—

"This most excellent prince was much concerned at the foresight of the contests and disorders which would ensue, though the first attacks made by Luther were upon very plausible grounds. By his own judgment and sagacity, and by long experience in the art of government, he well knew the danger of revolutions. But being a truly religious man, and one who feared God, he consulted not the dictates of merely worldly and political wisdom, which might have inclined him to stifle at once all symptoms of innovation. He determined to prefer the glory of God to all other considerations,

When Erasmus had withdrawn, he sat down with Spalatinus, and instantly wrote a few concise AXIOMS, as they have been called, respecting Luther and his cause. The substance of several of them is as follows :

1. A love of tyranny, and a hatred of learning, is the vile source of all these commotions.

2. Hence clamours and plots, bitter enmities, and acrimonious publications.

3. Persons of the best morals, and of the purest faith, are the least offended with Luther.

4. There are some who take advantage of the pope's good nature.

5. The pope prefers the glory of Christ to his own ; and the salvation of souls to any other gain.

6. It would be both for the dignity and the interest of the pope, that this contest should be settled by wise, grave, and unsuspected characters.

7. The barbarity of this bull against Luther offends all good men, as it is indeed unworthy of a mild vicar of Christ.

8. Only two of the universities, out of so many, have condemned Luther ; and these have not convicted him, nor do they themselves agree as to their reasons.

9. Luther's proposals,—to defend himself publicly, or to submit his case to unsuspected judges,—seem perfectly fair to all reasonable men.

10. The man aims at neither rank nor profit,—and therefore he is the less suspected.

11. What has hitherto been written against Luther is disapproved even by those divines who dissent from the reformer's tenets.*

The paper containing these axioms was put into the

and to listen to the divine command which enjoins obedience to the gospel. He knew that it was a horrible profaneness to resist the truth, when plainly seen and known. He had studiously examined Luther's works, and accurately weighed his proofs and testimonies ; and he would not suffer doctrines to be oppressed and smothered which he judged to be the word of God. The Holy Spirit confirmed and supported him in these excellent resolutions ; insomuch that, though the emperors Maximilian and Charles, and the Roman pontiffs, urged this prince,—and not without menaces,—to hinder Luther from preaching and writing in his dominions, he was not in the least degree shaken or intimidated. Yet he presumed not to rely entirely on his own judgment in a matter of so great importance, but took the advice of other persons, who were venerable for their rank, learning, and experience."

* Luth. Op. ii.

hands of Spalatinus by Erasmus himself; but the cautious author of them soon after wrote a most pressing note to Spalatinus, in which he entreated him to return it; alleging as a reason, "lest Aleander should make a bad use of its contents."*

There is, however, no doubt that Erasmus heartily disapproved the severe and despotic proceedings of the Roman court in the condemnation of Luther. The popish historians inform us, that he held the pope's bull to be a forgery, and would not be convinced of the contrary till Aleander had permitted him to examine it. That after this he went about by night to the princes and their friends, for the purpose of alienating their affections from the pope and from Aleander, telling them the bull had been extorted, contrary to the pontiff's real inclinations, by the artifices of malevolent persons; and that in a conversation with Aleander, he was very pressing that the resolution to burn Luther's books might be dropped, or at least retarded.†

The legates of the pope, in their turn, are said to have plied Erasmus closely with the offer of a rich bishopric, if he would undertake to write against Luther: but he answered them: "Luther is too great a man for me to encounter. I do not even always understand him. However, to speak plainly, he is so extraordinary a man, that I learn more from a single page in his books than from all the writings of Thomas Aquinas."—Such was the reputation of Luther for profound knowledge in divinity.

From little anecdotes of this kind we often learn more of the real judgment of mankind concerning extraordinary characters, than from long historical details.

For example: Count Nassau, governor of Flanders, Brabant, and Holland, exhorted the divines at the Hague

* Seckendorf informs us, that Jerome Aleander had formerly been secretary to the infamous Cæsar Borgia; and he calls him a servant worthy of such a master. He was made archbishop of Brindisi by Clement VII., and a cardinal by Paul III. Luther also gives him a very bad character. He represents him as covetous, proud, and passionate, and as one who did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and wallowed in the most infamous voluptuousness. He owns, however, that he was well skilled in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Erasmus often speaks of him, and generally to his disadvantage; e. g. "Aleander is a man, to say no worse of him, not superstitiously addicted to truth." He acted a conspicuous part at the Diet of Worms.—Ep. Eras. p. 1095, "*non superstitiose verax.*"

† Pallavic. and Comment. de Luth.

in the following manner ; “ Go and preach the gospel in simplicity and truth, as LUTHER DOES ; and you will offend nobody, nor suffer any molestation.”

Again : The academicians of Louvain complained to Margaret, the emperor’s sister, governess of the Netherlands, that Luther, by his writings, was subverting Christianity. “ Who is this Luther ?” said she. They replied, “ He is an illiterate monk.” “ Is he so ?” said she : “ Then do you, who are very learned and numerous, write against this illiterate monk ; and surely the world will pay more regard to many scholars than to one ignoramus.”

Another instance : At the emperor’s table, mention being made of Luther, Ravenstein said ; “ Here is one Christian arisen among us at last, after four hundred years ; and the pope wishes to kill him. Our teachers at Louvain, by dint of bribes, obtained the burning of Luther’s books. The pile was kindled, and great was the concourse of the students and others around it. But what books, think ye, did they bring ? Not those of Martin ; but a great deal of monkish trash was committed to the flames.”*

While the minds of men of all ranks and orders were thus agitated with the ecclesiastical contention, it was not to be supposed that the active, ardent disposition of Luther himself would permit him to be an indolent spectator. The interests of the pure gospel of Christ, the reputation of the reformer as a profound divine, and even his personal safety, were all at stake. Add to this, that Luther’s views of the nature and importance of religious truth, as well as the tenderness of his conscience, did not at all dispose him to adopt that conciliatory, middle sort of plan, which was constantly the object of Erasmus’s wishes.—Accordingly,

The first defensive step of our reformer was to appeal from the sentence of the Roman pontiff to the superior authority of a general council. The contents of this appeal are much the same as of the former at Wittemberg in 1518.†

There is, however, this difference, that he now absolutely ceases to preserve any measures with the pope.—He appeals from him,—1. As a rash, iniquitous, tyrannical judge ;—2. As a hardened heretic and apostate ;—

* *Ex Libell. in Biblioth. Paul. Lips per Seck.*

† Page 306 of this vol.

3. As an enemy, antichrist, and opposer of the Sacred Scriptures ;—4. As a proud and blasphemous despiser of the sacred Church of God, and of all legal councils.

Soon after, he published, in answer to the bull, two small tracts, in which he exposes, with great spirit, the injustice, arrogance, and despotism of the Roman court. The **FIRST** is entitled, *Martin Luther against the execrable Bull of Antichrist*. In this he affects to entertain some suspicion that the bull itself is a wicked forgery of Eckius and his party. How, said he, is it possible that so wild and unchristian a composition should be the production of the pontiff and his learned cardinals? If indeed the fact should turn out to be so, if indeed the bishop of Rome should be actually found to rage against him in the manner which the terms of the bull implied, he congratulated himself for being called to suffer in so righteous a cause. He could have but one wish, namely, never more to be reconciled to so impious an Antichrist; never more to desire communication with him; but to surrender his life, if it so pleased God, with grateful joy and thanksgiving. On account of his sins, he said, he merited other treatment than so distinguished and honourable a martyrdom. The author of this damnatory bull, continued he, does not understand Luther. Luther has been long used to controversies; and is not to be frightened by vain threatenings. He knows the difference between an unsatisfactory, unmeaning paper, and the powerful written word of God.

Luther then calls on all Christian kings and princes, and particularly on the emperor Charles V., and puts them in mind of their engagements at their baptism. He addresses bishops, learned doctors, and all who confess the name of Christ, and entreats them to come forward and defend the distressed church of God from the machinations of the papists. Lastly, with the greatest seriousness he admonishes the pope himself, and his cardinals, no longer to persevere in their madness, no longer to act the undoubted part of the antichrist of the Scriptures.

Our reformer calls his **SECOND** tract, *A defence of the articles of Martin Luther, which are condemned by the Bull of Leo X.*

It is much longer than the former; for in this the author defends, in their order, all the forty-one articles of his writings which had been censured by the bull. We need not be particular here, as the work chiefly relates to

papal dogmas, concerning which no protestant can be in doubt.

Perhaps the most edifying part of this performance is his reasoning in support of the authority of Scripture : "The sacred writings," says he, "are not to be understood but by that Spirit with which they were written ; which Spirit is never felt to be more powerful and energetic than when HE attends the serious perusal of the writings which HE HIMSELF dictated. Setting aside an implicit dependence on all human writings, let us strenuously adhere to the Scriptures alone. The primitive church acted thus : she must have acted so ; for she had seen no writings of the fathers. The Scripture is its own interpreter, trying, judging, and illustrating all things. If it be not so, why do Augustine and other holy fathers appeal to the Scripture as the first principles of truth, and confirm their own assertions by its authority ? Why do we perversely interpret the Scriptures, not by themselves, but by human glosses, contrary to the example of all fathers ? If these fashionable modes of exposition be right, we had better at once admit, that the writings of the fathers are more perspicuous than the Scriptures. Again : If this be the case, the fathers themselves acted very absurdly when they undertook to prove their own writings by the authority of Scripture ; and it will follow that we ought to pay more regard to expositors than to the word of God. The apostles themselves proved their assertions by the Scriptures ; yet they surely had more right to plead their own authority than any of the fathers had. Let the fathers be allowed to have been holy men ; still, they were only men, and men inferior to apostles and prophets : let them, however, be an example to us ; and, as they in their time laboured in the word of God, so let us in our days do the same. There is one vineyard, and there are labourers employed at different hours. It is enough that we have learned from the fathers the duty of studying, and diligently labouring in the Scriptures ; it is not necessary that we should approve of all their works. There are seasons when the diligence of many does not afford what a critical opportunity alone gives to one,—provided that that opportunity be connected with the incomprehensible energy of the Holy Spirit."

Sentiments like these had scarcely, for many ages, been whispered in the Christian world. Even the best and

wisest of men had long been accustomed to lay an undue stress on human authority; and, in many instances, the most unwarrantable tenets had rested on the credit of real or pretended fathers. The various mischiefs which had arisen from this practice, have been repeatedly deplored in the course of this history; but the time was now approaching, when the majesty of the Divine word began to be revered as decisive in all cases of doubt. It was reserved to an excommunicated monk to explain to mankind THE RIGHT USE of Scripture, and to impress on their minds its immense importance: indeed the light of the apostolic age began to beam on the nations of Europe; and we may justly consider the years we are reviewing, as marked by a revolution in religion, which is highly memorable in the annals of the church, and productive of the most salutary consequences to millions of such individuals as have thought, or may think, the care of an immortal soul to be a weighty and a rational employment.

But the asperity of Luther's style of writing threw a shade over all his virtues; and, though the rudeness and indelicacy of the age in which he lived will account, in great part, for this defect, and though the same expressions which he used, would, at this day, indicate a far greater acrimony of temper, even his friends could not, perhaps, fully justify his want of mildness and moderation. The court of the elector more than once reproved his excessive fervour; and those who admired the shrewdness, the solidity, the sincerity, and the magnanimity of his conceptions, could not commend the manner in which he often conveyed them. But far too much stress has been laid upon this defect—let us hear him, for once, speak for himself.

“I own,” said he to Spalatinus, “that I am more vehement than I ought to be: I have to do with men who blaspheme evangelical truth; with wolves; with those who condemn me unheard, without admonishing, without instructing me; and who utter the most atrocious slanders against myself and the word of God: even the most senseless spirit might be moved to resistance by their unreasonable conduct; much more I, who am choleric by nature. am possessed of very irritable feelings, and of a temper easily apt to exceed the bounds of moderation. I cannot, however, but be surprised whence this novel taste arose, to call every thing spoken against an adversary

abusive language. What think ye of Christ? Was he a reviler, when he calls the Jews an adulterous and perverse generation, a progeny of vipers, hypocrites, the children of the devil? What think ye of Paul, who calls the enemies of the gospel, dogs and seducers; who, in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, inveighs against a false prophet in this manner: ‘O full of all subtlety and all malice, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness.’ Why does not Paul gently soothe the impostor, rather than thunder at this rate? A mind conscious of truth cannot with easy indifference endure the obstinate enemies of truth.—I see that all persons demand of me moderation, and especially those of my adversaries who least of all exhibit it! If I am too warm, I am yet frank and open; in which point I think that I excel those, who always act with artifice and guile.”*

In another letter to the same friend, he expresses himself thus: “I see clearly that Erasmus is very far from a right knowledge of the nature of saving grace. In all his writings his grand object is to avoid the cross, give no offence, and live at peace. Hence he thinks it proper, on all subjects, to display a sort of civility, good nature, and good breeding; but I say, Behemoth† will pay no regard to such treatment, nor ever be amended by it. Popery will NEVER be reformed one tittle by writings, that give no offence, that make no attack; in a word, that do not bite. For the pontiffs consider these very gentle and civil admonitions as a species of servile cringing; they are content to be feared; and they persevere in their courses, as though they had an absolute right to remain incorrigible.”‡

Again, in a dedication to the elector, of one of his Commentaries on a portion of the Gospels, he freely acknowledges that he had not obeyed that prince’s admonitions to avoid all acrimony in his controversies;§ still he said,

* Lib. i. Ep.

† Job xl. He means popery.

‡ Lib. i. Ep.

§ Melancthon informs us, that after the conversation at Cologne (mentioned at page 387 of this volume) between the elector and Erasmus, in which the latter blamed Luther for want of greater mildness in his controversies, the elector wrote to our reformer on the subject, and admonished him, in the most serious manner, to desist from the use of acrimonious language.

Erasmus, in one of his controversial tracts, alludes to the conversation at Cologne:—“I frankly,” says he, “told the duke of Saxony, in the presence of George Spalatinus, how offensive

“ though he might have transgressed the bounds of religion and moderation in his answers to the impertinencies of his abandoned adversaries, he trusted some allowance would be made, when it was considered how numerous were the virulent invectives which he alone had to sustain.”

The reader will judge for himself how far these arguments and suggestions of Luther afford a satisfactory apology for the vehemence of his style. We shall have a future opportunity to observe him more humbled under it. But the excellency of Divine wisdom appears the greater and the more admirable, in executing, by an instrument who was a stranger to the false maxims of human policy, such marvellous things as have rarely been effected by contrivances the most artful and well digested. In justice to the Saxon reformer, it ought to be added, that the heats and commotions of his mind appear to have been always of a transient nature, to have evaporated in words, never to have left any stains on his general conduct or measures ; and,—if we except the mere use of severe terms and expressions,—to have seldom either injured his argumentation, or led him, even in the most trying scenes, to transgress the rules of charity, moderation, and decorum.—His great historical adversary, the Jesuit Maimbourg, says, “ Luther wrote against the pope’s bull, and defended all his errors. He treated the author of the bull as antichrist ; and, like a madman, filled his book with the most atrocious and injurious expressions. Yet it cannot be denied that, notwithstanding this heat and impetuosity, which were natural to him, he always considered well what he wrote, and always in his writings displayed the man of genius and erudition.”

The church of God, we may conclude, would lose but little by this warmth of Luther’s temper ; as it neither affected the acuteness of his talents, nor betrayed him into unchristian principles. In regard to his adversaries, the supporters of the existing ecclesiastical domination, they had attained a height of wickedness in theory, and an effrontery in practice, which could scarcely be described in too strong terms by the most keen and severe satirist.*

Luther’s acrimonious language was to me, and to others. They answered, that in his sermons and lectures he was as mild as possible.”—*Erasm. Purg. ad. Expos. Hutteni.*

* The strongest expressions used by Luther must be considered by no means beyond what the proceedings of his adversaries would justify, if considered *on’y* in that view.—*Ed.*

When Luther, by his publications, had opened men's eyes to the impiety and injustice of the sentence of the Roman court, he proceeded to perform one of the boldest actions recorded in history. He was convinced that his appeal to a general council would be disregarded by the pope and his cardinals; and he foresaw that if he did not soon recant his heresies, the thunder of actual excommunication would be levelled against the man who had so long been the object of ecclesiastical indignation. He determined, therefore, to separate himself from the communion of the church of Rome: and as Leo, in the execution of the bull, had appointed Luther's books to be burnt, he, by way of retaliation, erected an immense pile of wood without the walls of Wittemberg, and there, in the presence of the professors and students of the university, and of a vast multitude of spectators, committed to the flames the papal bull of his excommunication, together with the volumes of the decretals and canon law which relate to the pontifical jurisdiction. It has been thought probable that Luther was directed in this spirited measure by persons well skilled in the law. For, by thus voluntarily withdrawing himself in a public manner from the Romish church, it was supposed he had eluded and rendered insignificant any further exercises of papal authority against his person. The man was now no longer a subject of the pontiff, and therefore it must be deemed superfluous and absurd to eject him by force from an ecclesiastical community of which he had ceased to be a member.* To me I confess this reasoning appears to be neither sound nor necessary. Not sound,—because, on the supposition that the papal hierarchy was in the right, and Luther in the wrong, his separation from the church must have been considered as a vain and futile evasion. For if an offender, however grievous, should be allowed, in the moment before he is going to suffer punishment, to plead his just right to withdraw himself from the society whose laws he has broken, there is at once an end of all penal sanctions, and, by consequence, a dissolution of government. Not necessary—because the explanation of Luther's conduct in no case requires nice and subtle distinctions. In this instance, he left the Romish communion because he considered that church as corrupt and impious. Already he had declared war against the pope;

* Mosheim.

he had boldly denominated him the MAN OF SIN, and exhorted all Christian princes to shake off his usurpations. Under such circumstances, it was not like Luther to have recourse to the dubious argumentations of lawyers: it was more like a true servant of God, more like a student of his Bible, well versed in the stories of the worthies of the Old Testament, and inflamed with a holy zeal to imitate Phineas, Samuel, Daniel, and the rest; and abundantly more in harmony with the natural temper of the man, to act the part of a determined adversary, to rest his personal defence on the vigour and perseverance of his attacks, and to aim at nothing short of victory in his contest with the pontiff. Moreover, to defy the court of Rome, and publicly burn the sentence of Leo X., was the wisest resolution which could possibly have been adopted, even if Luther had regarded only his own individual safety. At once it encouraged his friends and astonished his enemies. The die was cast: and his life was to be saved, not by a vain assertion that he was no longer a subject of the pope, but by putting it out of the power of antichrist to do him harm. Every step which the reformer took relative to this important and interesting transaction accords with these ideas. That the bold thought had been conceived in his mind for some time past appears clearly from his letter to Spalatinus already mentioned. That letter was dated the tenth of July, 1520. Let the curious reader attend also to the dates of some other things which are already before him, and he will be enabled to form a judgment of Luther's vigour and activity in this critical business. He is to be informed, then,

1. That Luther published the tract mentioned page 374 of this volume, in JUNE, 1520, the very month in which the pope's bull was actually issued at Rome; and the tract mentioned page 376, in the succeeding AUGUST.

2. That in OCTOBER he was first informed that Eckius had brought the bull into Germany, and was doing his utmost to promote the reception of it.*

3. That on the seventeenth of NOVEMBER Luther appeared in form to a general council.

4. That on the first of DECEMBER, in two distinct treatises,† he attacked the author of the bull as antichrist, and

* Letter to Spalatinus, page 379 of this volume.

† A brief account of them is given in pp. 391, 392.

defended such of his own doctrines as had been pronounced heretical.

5. And lastly, That it was on the tenth of DECEMBER, 1520, that he burnt publicly the pontifical law and the pope's sentence.

This last extraordinary action of Martin Luther, taken with all the circumstances that accompanied it, may be considered as carrying his opposition against the sovereign pontiff to the highest pitch. For besides the instances of contempt and defiance, which took place on the day itself of the burning of the papal law and papal decrees, there were others which soon followed that memorable spectacle, and which must have been deemed still more affronting to the majesty of the pope. To convince mankind that the measure which he had just executed with so much firmness and intrepidity, was not a hasty thought, or the ebullition of a sudden gust of passion, he immediately selected THIRTY ARTICLES from the code of papal laws, as a specimen of the iniquitous contents of the books which he had just consumed. Upon these he wrote concise and pointed remarks; he then printed the whole, and circulated the little tract among the people, calling upon them in the most animated strains to exercise their own judgments in matters of such vast importance. "Let no man's good sense," said he, "be so far seduced as to reverence the volumes which I have burnt, on account of their great antiquity or their high titles. Let every one first hear and see what the pope teaches in his own books, and what abominable, poisonous doctrines, are to be found among the SACRED, SPIRITUAL laws; and then let him freely judge whether I have done right or not in burning such writings."

The two last of the articles selected by Luther were as follows:

Art. 29. The pope has the power to interpret Scripture, and to teach as he pleases; and no person is allowed to interpret in a different way.

Art. 30. The pope does not derive from the Scripture, but the Scripture derives from the pope, authority, power, and dignity.

Luther then affirms, that, comparing together the different parts of the canon law, its language amounts to no less than this; "That the pope is God on earth; above all that is earthly or heavenly, temporal or spiritual; That all

things belong to the pope; and, 'That no one must venture to say, What doest thou?'

"Let these ARTICLES," continues he, "suffice for the present. If any papal advocate shall be so wanton as to defend them, I will then not fail to place the picture I have given in a much clearer light. Nothing can be easier to me than to produce many more passages of the same stamp. Were I to proceed with the sad tale I have to tell, it would appear that all which hitherto I have advanced against the popedom, was but jest and diversion.

"I undertook this cause at first in the NAME OF GOD; and in the confident hope that the favourable moment was arrived when of itself, and without further help from me, it would proceed, as the cause of God, to certain victory."*

Thus does it appear that the grace of God directed Luther, in this instance, as in many others, to pursue such measures as were best calculated to defeat the crooked politics of his unprincipled adversaries. To expose to every eye those secrets of the canonical volumes, which sanctioned the proceedings of the Roman court, was to shake the whole papal edifice to its foundations; nor was it possible that a hierarchy so corrupt and despotic could long survive the free publication and dispersion of its principles among the people. Daily, men were accustomed to submit without remedy, and often without murmuring, to the most shameful abuses of ecclesiastical authority; but when they were shown that their sufferings were the result of an iniquitous SYSTEM, when they read the extravagant propositions which proclaimed the absolute power of the pope, and their own ignominious bondage, their patience started and began to mutiny against a jurisdiction, which their understandings, as well as Luther's observations and comments, convinced them was founded altogether in injustice and impiety.—Hence it was, that many, even of the Roman catholics in Germany, who were zealous for the liberty and independence of their country, were disposed to countenance the Reformer in his resistance to the pope's tyrannical bull; and hence also, though Alexander procured a second bull against him, couched in the most peremptory and definitive terms, it proved almost entirely inefficient. Seckendorf informs us, that in Saxony there is not the smallest vestige of it to be found.

* Luth. Op. ii.

This second bull was issued in a little more than three weeks from the burning of the pontifical books, namely, on January the third, 1521. In it the pope, most arrogantly and impiously, styles himself, THE DIVINELY APPOINTED DISPENSER OF SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL PUNISHMENTS. He then repeats the former bull; and tells us, that some persons, upon the publication of it, had repented of their sins, and obtained absolution. But on Luther and his followers, whatever might be their rank or dignity, he pronounces his eternal anathemas.

Mankind, however, could not but take notice how low the pontifical majesty was fallen. The POPE had publicly burnt the doctrinal articles of a MONK; the MONK in return had burnt as publicly the bull and decretals of the POPE; and they appear to be on a footing of equality. Aleander also had obtained leave to burn the Reformer's books in several cities of Belgium; and the friends of Lutheranism retaliated on the pope in Saxony, and even at Leipsic, in defiance of the duke George, who always showed himself much attached to the papacy.

I studiously avoid secular history; but a brief reference to the political state of Europe seems necessary on this occasion, in order to illustrate that wonderful concurrence of providential events, which enabled Luther thus to brave the pope with impunity. The pontifical character had been debased extremely by the vices and enormities of Alexander VI. and Julius II. Leo X. who now filled the papal chair, brought not so much honour to the see by his elegant and literary taste, as he disgraced it by his prodigality and profaneness, and enfeebled it by his indolence. Frederic the WISE had an established character in Europe for wisdom and probity, which rendered him far more respectable than any pope of Rome had been for a long time. Hence the silent protection afforded by this prince to Luther, proved his sufficient defence, not only against the tyranny and indignation, but even against the dexterity and management of the Roman court. The pope, his cardinals, his doctors of divinity and of law, had met together, deliberated and passed sentence with the greatest formality; but nobody appeared to execute the pontifical mandates. We have observed that the emperor Charles V. had recently been obliged to the generosity of Frederic for his elevation to the imperial throne, this disinterested prince having resolutely refused that dignity

when offered to him, and having at the same time declared that the German empire, on account of the formidable strength and hostile designs of the Turkish monarch, required a HEAD of far greater POWER to defend it, than he could pretend to possess. It was this reason chiefly that seems to have influenced the electors in giving their suffrages to Charles. For, by inheritance from his father Philip, son of the last emperor Maximilian, he had the possession of Austria and the Netherlands; and by his mother he had the kingdom of Spain. Add to this, his dominions stretched along that frontier, which lay most exposed to the enemy; and he was also a prince remarkable for his great personal qualities and endowments; and still more so for the uncommon lustre which was shed on the age in which he lived by a number of marvellous events,—events too in which his genius and capacity had no share. It was natural therefore that this illustrious prince, singularly and greatly indebted as he was to the elector of Saxony, should by no means be inclined hastily to compel him to persecute his highly esteemed professor of the university of Wittemberg. Moreover, as if all the world had conspired to favour the Reformation—that rivalry, which soon commenced between Francis I. of France and Charles V.—the former having been also a candidate for the empire, produced such hostility between these two powerful monarchs, as effectually prevented them from uniting to crush protestantism in the bud. Even the growing power of Mahometanism intimidated the papal sovereignties, and checked their rage for persecution. In fine, the determined temper and peculiar situation of Henry VIII. of England, were soon overruled by HIM, in whose HAND are the hearts of princes, to favour the progress of divine truth in Europe.

It is perhaps in the artful and extensive politics of Charles V. that we are to look for a complete explanation of that middle course which he held respecting the ecclesiastical dissensions, immediately after the imperial sceptre was placed in his hands. If he had possessed no other dominions but those which belonged to him in Germany, he might probably have favoured the man who boldly asserted many privileges and immunities for which the empire had long struggled with the popes.* But the dangerous schemes which his rival Francis I. was

* Robertson, Charles V.

forming against him, made it necessary that he should secure the friendship of Leo X. Accordingly he acceded to the first demand of Aleander, which regarded the burning of the heretic's writings ; but the second demand, which would have endangered the life of Luther, his grateful sense of the important services of Frederic induced him to refuse, or at least to evade, by deferring the consideration of the whole question till the next imperial diet, which he had ordered to be held at Worms on the sixth of January 1521. This suspension of severities against Luther was by no means pleasing to the haughty pontiff, who was accustomed to hear of nothing but a prompt obedience to his commands from all quarters : the emperor however adhered steadily to this resolution ; for besides the motives, just mentioned, of gratitude towards Frederic, his own good understanding pointed out to him, first, the justice and reasonableness of the thing itself, and in the next place, if Luther was indeed to be condemned, the expediency of having the public opinion on the side of so harsh a measure. Charles clearly saw, that as matters then stood, there were in the minds of many impartial persons, strong prejudices in favour of Lutheranism ; and still stronger suspicions, that in the cause of Luther himself, partiality, private interest, and private resentment, had influenced the determinations of the Roman court. Moreover, it was a plausible, a persuasive, and a sound part of the Reformer's defence, that he had constantly requested to have his cause tried, before unsuspected judges in Germany, by the ecclesiastical laws and customs of the empire ; and that, though he had been compelled, for conscience sake, to separate himself from the Roman church, he remained notwithstanding a member of the Catholic church, whose representative was that general council to which he had actually appealed, and to whose impartial decisions he was ready to submit.*

* This judicious distinction appeared to Luther to be solid, and of the utmost importance.—The church of Rome considered the popes as infallible ; whereas Luther maintained that they were fallible, like other men ; and that even St. Peter himself had actually erred in his conduct, as appears from Scripture. A general council, legally convened, Luther held to be the highest human ecclesiastical authority ; and of course superior to that of the pope. To such a council, and not to a partial and prejudiced assembly of the pontiff and his friends, our Reformer appealed from the cruel and iniquitous sentence of Leo X. The sentiments of Luther on this point

On these various accounts, the emperor considered the obstacles to a hasty procedure against Luther as insuperable.

Still, it is not easy to determine, how far either the judgment or the passions of Charles V. were really concerned in the part which he acted in regard to the German reformer and his friends. When we view the young monarch surrounded with a multiplicity of vast and complicated affairs, possessing already immense dominion and territory, and urged by a restless ambition to acquire more, it may seem the most probable supposition, that he beheld the increase of Lutheranism with neither much dislike nor much satisfaction, but rather with the curious and watchful eye of a politician, who would be disposed, whenever it was in his power, to make the interests of the church subservient to his worldly purposes. However, if any one feels inclined to give Charles credit for a greater and more sincere religious zeal in favour of the established system, he will not be in want of plausible arguments on that side of the question. These, it must be owned, will readily occur,—whether we consider the youth and inexperience of the newly elected emperor; for he was but about twenty years old, and probably little informed respecting the reigning corruptions of the church;—or whether we reflect on his early habits, his education and prejudices, and the influence of his Italian and Spanish ministers;—or lastly, whether we advert to the decisive measures which he soon adopted in support of the papal domination.

Be this point as it may, it was of immense consequence to the infant reformation, that the HEAD of the empire constantly refused to publish any conclusive edict against Luther, before the discussion of his case at the approaching diet of Worms. By this means a little time was gained; and so critical were the circumstances, that that little was found sufficient for the production of the most important effects. The reader will understand me to allude to the progress of that amazing REVOLUTION of

entirely accorded with the determinations of the councils of Basil and Constance; and it may be added, with the judgments of the most moderate and most learned persons of the German, Flemish, French, and British nations. We need not therefore wonder that his appeal from the inferior power of the pope, to the supreme jurisdiction of a council, found many advocates. Apell. Mart. Luth. vol. i.

sentiment, which was taking place in the minds of the people. Their attention had been awakened; and a considerable impression made on their judgments. Their reverence for the ancient doctrines and systems was extremely weakened; and the controversies were carried on with warmth and freedom. The knowledge of true theology and of the divine truths of the gospel was rapidly advancing at Wittenberg. The fame of Luther's wisdom and of Melancthon's learning filled that university with students, who imbibed their masters' opinions, and on their return home propagated them among their countrymen with the most astonishing zeal and success. To be brief; by the judicious and diligent explication of the written word of God, during the short space of the years 1518, 1519, and 1520, the systematic prejudices of many centuries were almost overturned in the minds of multitudes of the inhabitants of various parts of Europe.

To carry forward, and, if possible, to accelerate this glorious REVOLUTION in favour of Christian truth was the great object of Luther. While the several illustrious monarchs of the sixteenth century * were struggling for pre-eminence in power and grandeur, his contest was entirely with the rulers of the darkness of this world and with spiritual wickedness in high places.† Few men, of those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, have surrendered themselves and their cause into the hands of God with more perfect resignation than Luther did. His affairs were coming fast to a crisis; his life was in the most imminent danger; and he had but one patron of any considerable rank or distinction; yet can we nowhere trace in him the smallest anxiety on account of his mere personal safety. Those moments of suspense in which most persons are usually found incapable of continued study or cool deliberation, our industrious theologian considered as a precious little interval of time, granted to him by Providence for the most important purpose of further enlightening mankind; and while his friends trembled for the issue of the next German diet, he himself seems to have rejoiced that even so short a season was thus afforded him for pursuing his studies in divinity. In his judgment, the WRITTEN WORD of God, laid open, and rightly explained to the people, was always the most lawful and

* Leo X. Charles V. Francis I. Henry VIII. Solyman, &c.

† Ephes. vi. 12.

the most powerful engine for the destruction of the kingdom of Satan. All his success on the minds of the public, both before and after the conferences with Cajetan, he ascribed to the use and application of this engine. It behoved him therefore to make fresh efforts, without losing a single moment of time. Both the heads and the hearts of the nations were in a state of remarkable preparation for the reception of pure doctrine. The divine blessing attended his labours; and it seemed not unreasonable to hope, that from the circulation of judicious expositions of various parts of the Scriptures in the present critical conjuncture, the cause of Christian truth and knowledge might very soon have to triumph, on account of more rapid and complete victories than had yet been obtained over papal ignorance and papal superstition. Deeply impressed with these views, the Saxon theologian applied himself to the study of the sacred pages with redoubled ardour and assiduity. Aleander had burnt many of his books; but that very circumstance served to increase men's curiosity for reading them, as it did their author's zeal and industry in reconsidering and republishing the doctrines he had taught, in confirming them by new arguments, and rendering his compositions more correct and worthy of the approbation of the public.

Charles V. was elected emperor in the summer of 1519, and his first diet was expected to be held in the course of the same year; but the meeting of that assembly was postponed by various causes for more than a twelvemonth. Luther, during this short period, published an incredible number of sermons, paraphrases, and polemical tracts. To furnish the reader with even a very brief account of them all, would require no little time and labour. His adversary, the papal historian, Maimbourg, testifies abundantly to the general effects of his sermons and other writings. "Luther," says he, "in his sermons, attacked the vices of men with great acrimony: he likewise published, in the German and in the Latin languages, a number of pious books; for example, Expositions of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments; of certain portions of the Epistles and Gospels; of the Song of the blessed Virgin; of the Psalms; and particularly of the Epistle to the Galatians, wherein he says very good things. Moreover, as he lived a moral life, and was not given in the smallest degree to covetousness or any other vice, he

was universally held to be a good and great and even a holy man; insomuch, that it was the custom to paint his portrait with rays (or a circle) of glory around the head, as if he had been a canonized saint." *

Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians is in itself so excellent a performance, it was read with such great avidity immediately after its publication, and was so instrumental in promoting the glorious cause of protestantism, that it seems to have a superior claim to the attention of the historian. I have repeatedly read and meditated on this treatise; and, after the most mature reflection, am fully convinced, that as it was one of the most powerful means of reviving the light of Scripture in the sixteenth century, so it will, in all ages, be capable of doing the same, under the blessing of God, whenever a disposition shall appear among men to regard the oracles of divine truth, and whenever souls shall be distressed with a sense of in-dwelling sin. It will assuredly never be approved of, or even understood, by any but serious, humble, and contrite spirits, such being indeed the only persons in the world, to whom the all-important article of justification will appear worthy of all acceptance. The AUTHOR himself had ploughed deep into the human heart, and knew its native depravity; he had long laboured, to no purpose, to gain peace of conscience by legal observances and moral works; and had been relieved, from the most pungent anxiety, by a spiritual discovery of the doctrine just mentioned. He was appointed in the counsels of Providence,—by no means exclusively of the other reformers, but in a manner more extraordinary and much superior,—to teach mankind, after upwards of a thousand years' obscurity, this great evangelical tenet,—compared with which how little all other objects of controversy appear! namely, That man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ.† How this is taught in the epistle before us, has been briefly shown in a former volume,‡ and Luther's Commentary is perfectly consonant with that short ABSTRACT. In this admirable piece of divinity, the author, by numberless arguments, and particularly by the marked opposition between law and faith,|| law and grace,§ proves that, in justification before God, all sorts of human works are excluded, moral as well as ceremonial.

* Sect. 35.

† Gal. chap. ii. 16.

‡ See vol. i. p. 43.

|| Gal. iii. 12.

§ Gal. v. 4.

He restores likewise to the Christian world the true forensic sense of the term Justification, and rescues it from the erroneous sense, in which, for many ages, it had been misunderstood, as though it meant INFUSED habits of virtue, whence it had been usual to confound justification with sanctification. Taught by the Holy Spirit he traced the true distinction between the LAW and the GOSPEL, and pointed out the difference between acceptance with God and personal holiness. The former, he shows, is received as a free gift on Christ's account alone, by faith in the heart of a humbled sinner, and implies complete pardon and reconciliation with God;—the latter, which he insists on as equally necessary for eternal happiness, he describes as conjoined, but not compounded, with the former, imperfect always in this life, but sincerely pressed after and delighted in. By this doctrine, rightly stated and applied by the Holy Spirit, a new light breaks in on the mind; and Christianity appears singularly distinct not only from popery, but also from all other religions. Neither the superstitions of the papist, nor the sensibility of the humane, nor the splendid alms of the ostentatious, nor the most powerful efforts of unregenerate nature, avail in the smallest degree to the purchase of pardon and peace. The glory of this purchase demonstrably belongs to Christ ALONE: and he, who in real humility approves of, acquiesces in, and rests on Christ alone, is the true Christian. Thus self-righteous persons are rebuked: thus distressed consciences are relieved; and thus men are enabled to bring forth all the fruits of righteousness. An ill use, no doubt, has frequently been made of the precious doctrine here stated; and St. Paul's writings abound with admirable cautions on this subject. The sixth chapter to the Romans is full to the point. But this very circumstance, namely, that the true Christian notion of justification is apparently liable to a charge of antinomianism, unquestionably demonstrates that Luther, and the other reformers, did not mistake that apostle's meaning, because,—on the supposition that St. Paul really meant to ascribe the justification of a sinner before God to human works, in ANY SENSE of those TERMS,—the very plausibility of the objection loses all foundation. However, not to insist further on this argument, let him that would be wise in the things of God study this great Christian article of

the revealed method of fallen man's ACCEPTANCE WITH HIS MAKER; and let him do this with prayer for divine illumination. Let not any man suppose, as ignorance is ever apt to do,—that evangelical truth is so plain and obvious, that every one may attain it without attention, industry, or effort. Let him rather be told, that the way of life is deeply mysterious, and has great difficulties belonging to it, though nevertheless of infallible attainment to every humble, seeking, persevering soul.

The first edition of this Commentary, dedicated to the president Peter Lupin and to Carolstadt, was printed at Wittemberg in the autumn of the year 1519; and contains some things which I do not find in the later and more improved edition of 1536. I select the following passage, because in it the order and method of practical Christianity are beautifully and concisely delineated. “You now see, therefore, how it is that FAITH alone is not sufficient; and yet that faith alone JUSTIFIES; because if the faith be of the right sort, it is infallibly connected with a spirit of true benevolence. But this spirit of benevolence or LOVE cannot endure the works of the flesh; and thus it obeys the law, and attains the kingdom of God. Hence every thing is to be ascribed to faith, as faith is to the WORD, and the WORD to the divine compassion in the sending of apostles and preachers; so that all our sufficiency is of God, from whom cometh every best gift.

“THESE ARE THE POINTS OF DOCTRINE which ought to be explained to the people: and in the very order in which the apostle lays them down in this epistle. For example; let a man first learn to despair of his own strength; let him hear the word of evangelical faith; hearing, let him believe it; believing, let him call upon God; calling upon him, let him find, as he will find, that he is heard; being heard of God, let him receive the Spirit of love; receiving this Spirit, let him walk in the same, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but let him crucify them; lastly, being crucified with Christ, let him rise from the dead, and possess the kingdom of heaven.”

The Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians was printed both in Latin and in German, and thus became extensively diffused. It was also one material subject of Luther's lectures, *vivâ voce*, to the students of Wittemberg, for many years after its first publication. We are

indebted to the zeal and industry of George Rorar, a deacon of the university there, for the best of the old editions of this excellent work. Rorar, it seems, was a diligent ecclesiastic, who, with the help of some of the academics, wrote down what Luther said during his public lectures, and then submitted what he had written to the inspection and judgment of the lecturer. Luther expressed his astonishment at the bulk to which his exposition of this short epistle had grown. He wrote a preface to it, carefully revised the whole performance, and printed it in 1535 or 1536, from which later edition the following extracts are taken.

Those who feel interested for the successful progress of real evangelical truth, will not deem this account superfluous. It proves that this Commentary was NOT the hasty effusion of a turbulent or enthusiastic sectary, but the well-digested result of at least fifteen years' meditation on the epistle, and of fifteen years' experience in interpreting Scripture. The treatise itself will abundantly satisfy every inquirer, that the grand fundamental point,—the point which the reformer had most at heart in all his labours, contests, and dangers,—was the doctrine of Justification by faith alone.

“Once more,” says Luther, “I have undertaken, in the name of the Lord, to expound the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians; not that I have any wish to teach novel doctrines,—especially as Paul is now thoroughly known and familiar to us;—but because, as I have often forewarned you, our greatest and most pressing danger is, lest the devil should contrive to take away from us the pure doctrine of FAITH, and bring back into the church the exploded notions of WORKS and HUMAN TRADITIONS. It is of great moment, therefore, that this doctrine of FAITH should be kept in the constant and public exercise both of reading and hearing. For although it be ever so well known and digested, yet the devil is not dead, but walketh about constantly, and seeketh to devour us. Moreover, the FLESH is yet alive; and all sorts of temptations vex and oppress us on every side. Wherefore this CHRISTIAN ARTICLE can never be handled and inculcated enough. If this doctrine fall and perish, the knowledge of every truth in religion will fall and perish with it. On the contrary, if this do but flourish, all good things will also flourish, namely, true religion, the true worship of God, the glory

of God, and a right knowledge of every thing which it becomes a Christian to know.”*

In his preface to the Commentary, he calls the article of Justification, “THE ONLY SOLID ROCK; as being the doctrine which shows how we are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil, and how we become partakers of eternal life,—not by our own works, but by the help of another, the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ.

“This rock,” continues he, “did Satan shake in paradise, when he persuaded our first parents that by their own wisdom and power they might become like unto God; and thereby induced them to forsake true faith in God, who had given them life and a promise of its continuance.

“In opposition to the same principle of faith, this liar and murderer, the devil, who will be always like himself, stirred up Cain to murder Abel; and for no other reason but because his pious brother had, by FAITH, offered up a more excellent sacrifice; whereas Cain, by offering up his own works, WITHOUT FAITH, had not pleased God.

“By the very same abominable satanic spirit, which induced Cain to kill Abel, is Christ opposed and derided at this day, among those who would still be called by his name. So that there is abundant cause for diligently resisting the devil, by means of this fundamental article. Whether we be rude or eloquent, learned or unlearned, THIS ROCK must be published abroad in animated strains. If men should be silent, the very stones would cry out.

“It is written of Satan, ‘Thou shalt bruise his heel.’ And it should seem that Satan, at this very day, has no other business in hand, but this only, which is always peculiar to himself,—to persecute and vex our Saviour Christ, who is our perfect righteousness, WITHOUT ANY OF OUR WORKS.

“He does not rage in this manner against the lives and opinions of others; for example, against whoremongers, thieves, murderers, rebels against God, and unbelievers. To these he rather gives peace and quiet; and he even indulges such characters with all manner of delights according to their taste. And so it was in the primitive times. He not only suffered the idolatries and false religions of the whole world to be quiet, but he also mightily maintained and supported them. It was the church and

* Luth. Op. v. p. 272.

religion of Christ alone which he tormented in every way.

“ To this moment the papists continue to insist on the efficacy of works, and the worthiness of man, in direct opposition to the doctrine of salvation by grace. For they teach, think, and act against our Saviour Christ, who is our only righteousness. Let him, therefore, who can, hold fast to this one article of JUSTIFICATION. And as to those who have made shipwreck of their faith, we must let them be carried whither the sea and wind shall drive them, until they either return to the ship, or swim to the shore.

“ The conclusion is, there can be no peace as long as Christ and Belial disagree. If one heresy dies, another springs up. The reason is, the devil neither slumbers nor sleeps. It is now about twenty years that I have been a minister of Christ, and I can truly say, that I have been assailed by more than twenty sects, some of which are completely extinct, and others pant for life. Satan, the god of all dissensions, daily raises up new heresies ; the last of which is one that I should never have foreseen, or even once suspected ; namely, the sect of the Antinomians, who maintain that the TEN COMMANDMENTS ought to be taken out of the church ; and that men are not to be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the grace of Christ. The truth is,—what we have constantly taught, namely,—That broken and contrite spirits are to be comforted by Christ ; but that hardened Pharaohs, to whom the gospel has been long preached in vain, must be alarmed by the terrors of the law.”*

A few extracts from the Commentary itself shall close this account.

“ I remember, when I first began the contest with the papists, Dr. Staupitius, at that time an eminent person, and vicar of the Augustine order, said to me: ‘ On one account I like the doctrine you preach exceedingly. It gives the glory and every thing else to God alone, and nothing to man. Now it is clearer than the day, that it is impossible to ascribe too much glory, goodness, and mercy to God.’ This saying very much comforted and strengthened me.”

The following was a favourite passage with the excellent Seckendorf ; who seems to have thought it more to

* Præfat. Mart. Lut. in Epist. ad Galat.

the purpose than any thing that had been said on the subject of the union of believers with Christ, by the most celebrated mystics :—" This doctrine, therefore, of faith, must be taught in its purity ; namely, That as a believer, thou art by faith so entirely united to Christ, that he and thou are made as it were one person. That thou canst not be separated from Christ ; but always adhere so closely to him, as to be able to say with confidence, I am one with Christ ; that is, Christ's righteousness, his victory, his life, death, and resurrection, are all mine. On the other hand, Christ may say, I am that sinner ; the meaning of which is, in other words, his sins, his death, and punishment, are mine, because he is united and joined to me, and I to him. For by faith we are so joined together as to become one flesh and one bone. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones ;* so that, in strictness, there is more of an union between Christ and me than exists even in the relation of husband and wife, where the two are considered as one flesh.† This faith, therefore, is by no means an ineffective quality ; but possesses so great excellency, that it utterly confounds and destroys the foolish dreams and imaginations of the sophisters, who have contrived a number of metaphysical fictions concerning faith and charity, merits and qualifications.—These things are of such moment, that I would gladly explain them more at large if I could.

" A true and lively faith is opposite to the feigned faith of the hypocrite ; and a true faith incites a man to good works, through love. He who would be a Christian must be a believer ; but no man is a sound believer, if works of charity do not follow his faith. Thus, on both hands, the apostle shuts hypocrites out of the kingdom of God. On the left hand, he shuts out all such as depend on their works, for salvation, when he says, ' Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision ;' that is, no kind of work, but faith only, without any dependence on what we do, avails before God. On the right, he excludes all slothful, idle persons, who are disposed to say, If faith justifies us without works, then let us have no anxiety respecting good actions ; let us only take care and believe that we may do whatever we please.—Not so, ye enemies of all godliness. It is true, Paul tells you that faith only, without works, justifies ; however, he also tells you that a true faith, after

* Ephes. v. 30.

† Ibid. v. 31.

it has justified, does not permit a man to slumber in indolence, but that it worketh by love.

“The liberty of the gospel is an inestimable thing; but take care that ye use it not as an occasion to the flesh.

“Satan has not stirred up an evil either more extensive or more destructive than this; namely, when men abuse their Christian liberty to licentiousness. So the apostle Jude laments: ‘There are crept in unawares certain unholy men, which turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness.’* For the flesh does not understand the doctrine of grace. Therefore when it hears that we are justified by faith only, it abuses and perverts the doctrine by reasoning thus; ‘If we are without law, we may live just as we please.’

“Wherefore there is danger on BOTH SIDES. However, the one is more tolerable than the other. If the doctrine of grace or faith be not preached, no man can be saved; for it is faith only that justifies and saves. On the contrary, if faith be preached, as of necessity it must be, the greater part of mankind will interpret the doctrine in a carnal way, and so understand spiritual liberty as to allow indulgences of the flesh. This we may see in all ranks of life. All profess themselves to be evangelical; all boast of their Christian liberty; and yet give way to their lusts and passions, for example, to covetousness, pride, envy, pleasures, and such like. Who discharges his duty faithfully? Who serves his brother in a true spirit of charity? The disgrace which such conduct brings on the profession of the gospel puts me sometimes so out of temper, that I could wish these swine, that tread precious pearls under their feet, were still under the tyranny of the pope; for it is impossible that a people, so much resembling those of Gomorrah, should be kept in due subjection by the mild maxims of the gospel of peace.

“Moreover, we ourselves, the ministers of the gospel, are not so active and zealous in doing our duty, now that we have the LIGHT of the TRUTH, as we were before, during the DARKNESS of our IGNORANCE. We are grown cold and negligent in handling the WORD, and in prayer also, and lastly, both in well-doing and in suffering; inasmuch, that if Satan did not torment us internally with spiritual temptations, and externally with hostile persecutions, and above all, with the contempt and ingratitude of our

* Jude, ver. 4.

own congregations, we should become, I fear, quite careless, and lazy, and lost to every good work.

“It is very useful for sincere and pious persons to know and meditate on Paul’s doctrine concerning the contests of the flesh and the spirit. It is an admirable comfort to the tempted. When I was a monk, if at any time I happened to feel the motions of a bad passion, I used to think my prospect of salvation was completely over. I struggled in a variety of ways, both to overcome the bad passion and to quiet my conscience. All in vain. The lust of the flesh returned, and I was harassed with thoughts of this sort;—‘Thou hast committed this or that sin; thou art impatient; thou art envious; in vain hast thou entered into holy orders.’ Now if I had rightly understood Paul’s doctrine of the flesh lusting against the spirit I should not, so long and so miserably, have afflicted myself. I should have reflected, and said, as I do at this day, in similar situations: Martin, as long as thou remainest in the flesh thou wilt never be entirely without sin; thou art now in the flesh, and therefore thou must experience a contest with it: and this is agreeable to what Paul says, the flesh resisteth the spirit. Despair not thou, then, but strive manfully against all carnal dispositions, and fulfil not their lustings. Do thus, and the law shall have no condemning dominion over thee.

“Truly religious persons crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; and hence their sins do not finally ruin them. For if they obey the flesh by gratifying its concupiscence, they infallibly lose their faith and the Holy Ghost. Moreover, if they do not abhor their sins, sincerely repent, and return to Christ, that they may recover their faith and the Holy Ghost, they will die in their sins. Wherefore I can speak no comfort to those who dream they have faith, and yet live in sin. Against all such there is a dreadful sentence in force; namely, They that live after the flesh, shall die. And further, The works of the flesh are manifest; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, &c., and such like: **THEY WHO DO SUCH THINGS, SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

“The severe threatenings of Almighty God against sin have a due effect upon the minds of true believers, so as to deter them from breaking his laws. They arm themselves with the word of God with faith and with prayer,

and do not give way to the lusts of the flesh. In fact, they so resist the flesh as to nail it to the cross with all its sinful desires. Hence it is that the flesh, though yet alive, and capable of showing some signs of motion, cannot perform what it would, being bound hand and foot, and nailed fast to the cross. Such are the principles and such the practice of truly pious persons. The same important truths may be expressed a little differently, thus: The faithful, while they live on the earth, do actually crucify the flesh; that is, though they are sensible of its lustings, they do not obey them. Furnished with the armour of God, namely, faith, hope, and the sword of the Spirit, they oppose the natural, or carnal man; and with these spiritual arms, as it were with nails, fix him to the cross of Christ; and compel him, against his will, to be subject to the spiritual man or new creature. Afterwards, when they die, they entirely put off the carnal man; and they will rise from the dead with a body incorruptible, and free from sinful affections and lusts.

“To teach the doctrine of Justification by faith without works, and at the same time to insist on the necessity of good works, it must be owned, is a matter of considerable difficulty and danger. For unless the ministers of Christ be wise and faithful dispensers of the Divine mysteries, and know how to divide the word of Truth rightly, the distinct provinces of faith and works will be confounded. Both these provinces should be explained and impressed on the mind with the greatest diligence, yet in such a manner, that each of them may preserve its proper bounds. Otherwise, if works only are taught, as is the case in the pope’s kingdom, faith is lost. Again, if nothing but faith is inculcated, carnal men soon begin to dream that there is no need of good works. How careful is Paul to avoid being misunderstood! In the fourteenth verse of the fifth chapter he had observed that the whole law was fulfilled in one word: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ Indeed!! an objector might say,—Then if so, a man, by works of charity, may fulfil the law and be justified!—which is contrary to the whole epistle. No, says the apostle, I have neither forgotten, nor do I now contradict, my former argumentation concerning faith. I am precisely of the same opinion; and that ye may perceive me to argue consistently, I add, Walk in the Spirit, and

ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.* I do not mean that ye can be justified by the law; but this I mean: there are two principles of action within you, flesh and spirit; and I exhort you to obey the latter, that ye may be enabled to resist the former. It is but to a certain degree that ye can resist it; ye cannot entirely put off the flesh or kill it; and therefore, when I direct you to walk in the spirit, I sufficiently indicate to you the impossibility of your being justified by works of charity.”†

In furnishing the reader with these specimens of Luther's method of expounding Scripture, I have constantly aimed at giving the author's meaning, without adhering very closely to the letter. Certain allusions to the scholastic niceties of the times, and some other things of a like nature, which would have required long explanations, and contributed nothing to edification, are entirely omitted; and a few words are sometimes inserted for the sake of preserving the connection. No apology needs be made for placing in this part of the narrative a brief account of our reformer's Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians. The pious student of the history of the Reformation can scarcely be considered as forsaking his proper subject, and much less as misemployed, while he is perusing a few striking passages from a book which was of such signal service to the church of Christ, in the sixteenth century.‡

About the beginning of the year 1520 Luther wrote an

* Gal. v. 16.

† Luth. Op. v. 417, et se

‡ The only English translation of Luther's Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians, which I have seen, was the work of several pious persons. It has many defects, but is nevertheless a very useful performance. The book is scarce; and I cannot but observe, that a modern translation of BOTH the editions of Luther's commentaries on this epistle, with a few judicious notes, would be a most valuable present to the Christian world. Bucer writes thus to Spalatinus: “Luther, by the divine lucubrations which he has published, stands so high in my opinion, that I look up to him as an angelic guide in the interpretation of difficult passages of Scripture. How then, think you, did I rejoice when one of our brethren brought me his Commentary on the Galatians! After a very slight perusal of it, I was almost ready to dance for joy.”—So far the learned protestant Bucer.—Seck. 138. d.

In modern times it has been the fashion to treat this work rather roughly, and to suggest the necessity of many cautions. The reader will determine for himself, whether more judicious or more efficacious cautions have been given by others, than those interspersed throughout the Commentaries by Luther himself.

excellent consolatory tract for the particular use of the elector Frederic, who had lately endured a severe illness. Erasmus himself sent it to the bishop of Basle, in 1523, and commends it in these terms: "Luther's little book is exceedingly approved, even by those who have the greatest aversion to his doctrine; for he wrote this piece before matters were come to these extremities."* It is indeed an excellent performance, and deserves to be wholly transcribed. It consists of fourteen chapters, seven of which contain an account of the afflictions to which the Christian is exposed; and the other seven point out the effectual remedies and comforts which he should use.† He published a Commentary on the first twenty-two Psalms; also on some parts of the evangelists, and particularly on the Lord's Prayer.‡ Among his numerous sermons, I observe one on Matrimony; which proves that at that time, namely, 1519, he considered marriage as a SACRAMENT.§ He also wrote many controversial treatises about this period.

THE DIET OF WORMS.

The eyes of all Europe were fixed on the DIET OF WORMS. That general and astonishing REVOLUTION of sentiment which, we have observed, was taking place in the minds of the people, had proceeded, in regard to their religious views, with such incredible rapidity, that the emperor and the princes thought it necessary to take public cognizance of transactions which could now no longer be buried in obscurity. Accordingly Charles V., in his circular letters to the electors and other members of the Diet, informed them that he had summoned the assembly of the empire, for the purpose of concerting with them the most proper measures for checking the progress of those new and dangerous opinions, which threatened to disturb the peace of Germany, and to overturn the religion of their ancestors.||

After the diet had met, a considerable time was spent in formalities, and in making some general regulations respecting the internal police of the empire. They then proceeded to take into consideration the religious questions and controversies. The papal legates pressed hard for an immediate edict of condemnation against the man who

* Eras. p. 775.
§ Jen. i. 296.

+ Op. Jen. i. 395. b.
|| Robertson.

‡ Witt. vii. 99.

had so long disturbed the peace of the Church, and who, for more than six months, had been under actual sentence of excommunication, as an incorrigible heretic. It would be endless to recite the various artifices and manœuvres of the leading actors in the scenes at Worms; nor would this be so properly pertinent to the plan of our history, as to describe the progress of real religion itself in the hearts and understandings of mankind. Our industrious memorialist * details with great exactness the conferences between Pontanus, the elector's chancellor, and Glapio, a confessor of Charles V., in which fruitless pains were taken to compose the differences. Frederic, in his instructions to his chancellor, appears to have been governed by the same maxims, which had uniformly regulated his conduct throughout this business: that is, he continued firm, but cautious, insisting in general on an equitable hearing in behalf of his subject Luther, and declaring that he himself did not pretend to be a judge of theological doctrines and disputes.

The conferences just mentioned were of a private nature, and were carried on with the utmost secrecy; one of them was as follows; it was at the time kept secret, even from Spalatinus himself. It was in substance as follows.

Glapio. "I was delighted with the first publications of Luther. I said, What rich fruit the church may expect, if we judge from the buds and shoots which Luther has already thrown out. But when his book on the Babylonish Captivity came out, I was vexed as if any one had flogged me from head to foot. Indeed, I do not believe Luther will own it to be his: it is neither in the style, nor has it the polish of his writings. If it be really his, he must have written it when provoked by the Pope's bull. However, the case is not without remedy.—I wish I might be allowed to talk with the elector."

Pontanus. "My master is too much engaged; I pray, open your mind to me."—Then, with a most sanctimonious countenance, Glapio said:—

Glap. "I protest, it was the emperor's most ardent wish, before the publication of the Babylonish Captivity, that such a man should be reconciled to the church. Therefore, if Luther will but own, that in this tract some improper expressions have escaped him through passion, and that he meant nothing against the church, he will

* Seckendorf.

have all learned men in all nations on his side. His attempts to reform abuses have great merit in them ; but in the Babylonish Captivity he tries to roll a stone beyond his strength. His intentions are the best possible, but he does not consider the times and circumstances, and especially the princes. I wish the elector would depute trusty persons to settle the business in a private way."

Pont. " My master never undertook to defend Luther ; nor has Luther desired him to do so. But what do you suppose would settle the business ?"

Glap. " If Luther does not choose to recall this book as being written in a passion, let him say at once it is not his—for it really is not in his style."

Pont. " Well, but still there would be the pope's bull in force against him ; and the bull condemns his works before this was published."

Glap. " That may be got over. The bull was issued upon a supposed contumacy, when he really had not been heard ; and therefore the pope, in the plenitude of his power, can restore Luther ; and the rest may be settled by impartial judges : for he OUGHT to be heard, and heard by learned GERMANS. I would not have him leave the prince, who protects him. My advice is sound ; and there is nothing I more wish for, than a reform of the church. Luther, however, I must say, lays too much stress on scriptural arguments. The Scripture is like soft wax. One may prove any thing by it : for example, ' Pluck out your eye, and cast it from you.'—Can your master propose any better plan than this of mine ? Mine, I hope, will please the emperor ; for yesterday I said to his majesty, God will flagellate the emperor and all the princes, if the spouse of Christ is not freed from the loads which oppress her. Moreover, I added, this Martin is sent by God as a scourge, on account of our sins."*

The members of the diet OPENLY withstood the pope's advocates, in their attempts to procure Luther's condemnation without deliberation or inquiry. Such a proceeding they considered as inconsistent with justice, and unauthorized by precedent. Moreover, the emperor himself admonished the principal nuncio, Aleander, that it behoved him to explain to the diet some just and weighty causes of Luther's excommunication ; causes, too, which should be abstracted from the particular interests of the

* Seck. 143.—Add. ii. f.

court of Rome and of the pope, and be evidently connected with the general concerns of religion. At present, he said, an opinion very much prevailed in Germany, that because Dr. Luther had defended the rights and privileges of his countrymen, and had declaimed against those odious and arbitrary impositions of which the princes themselves had complained more than once, he was on that very account disliked and censured at Rome, and that, in fact, this was the real foundation of all the harsh and peremptory proceedings against him. So important a point must be cleared up before any further steps could be taken; and an opportunity therefore was now afforded the nuncio, of proving, to the satisfaction of a full diet, that the pontiff's damnatory edicts against Luther did not originate in partiality and injustice.*

Aleander undertook this business, and acquitted himself with considerable ability and effect. The papal historians magnify his eloquence and address on the occasion beyond all bounds. Pallavicinus, in particular, has given us a long and laboured philippic of his own making, which he supposes to have resembled the speech delivered by Aleander. The writers of the same class have in general followed the Italian author with confidence, and copied his misrepresentations without hesitation. They tell us, that he spoke for three whole hours with the greatest force and eloquence. But the Protestant reader, who has a relish for the instruction contained in Luther's Commentary on the Galatians, would probably think his time mispent in reading minute details of arguments in support of papal doctrines and papal authority. It will be proper, however, to subjoin a concise account of this celebrated speech.

1. He produced Luther's writings to the assembly; and, by quotations from them, endeavoured to prove that the whole sect of this notorious heretic, as he called Luther, ought to be abolished. He said that their principles were equally destructive to both the civil and ecclesiastical power; for they annihilated the spiritual jurisdiction of the head of the church, and even the authority of a general council: and if these were taken away, who would be left to interpret Scripture in doubtful cases? There would soon be as many religions, as there were men of fancy and imagination.

* Maimbourg, sect. 37.

2. He said this was not the worst. The Saxon heretic subverted the foundations of morality, by denying the very existence of HUMAN LIBERTY, and by maintaining that good and evil depended on a fatal and inevitable necessity. Thus a door was opened to the most unbounded licentiousness, when men had at hand this ready defence, or at least this excuse, for every crime they could commit, "Our fate did not permit us to do otherwise."—He then accused Luther of overturning the efficacy of the sacraments, and of inculcating a notion of Christian liberty, which gave the reins to vice and wickedness. If you believe this heretic, said he, there is no obligation in vows that have been made with the greatest solemnity. In fine, if his notions prevail, there is an end both of Christian piety and the tranquillity of kingdoms. The whole world will be thrown into confusion; there will be left no ties of obedience, either to princes, or even to God himself; because, according to this novel system, the commandments of the Supreme Being are incompatible with the powers and capacities of his creatures.

3. Aleander then observed; that in spite of the pontiff's utmost endeavours, for four years past, to free the world from this GREAT EVIL, it was daily spreading itself more and more, and appeared to be desperate and incurable. This detestable heresy ought to be exposed to public execration; and so ought its deceitful, rash, obstinate and furious author. An imperial edict for this purpose, was now, he said, the only remedy that remained. Nor was there any reason to apprehend lest such an edict should be attended with troublesome consequences. It would be made with the consent of the diet, and, no doubt, would be executed in all the states of the empire. The catholic party, he added, was infinitely the strongest; and it was not likely that those powers, who had hitherto supported Luther's cause, would incur the emperor's displeasure, by continuing to protect him.*

In our times, there can be no necessity to answer each of these positions of the papal orator by a regular course of argument. The real Christian will conclude, that taken together, they constitute the most solid ENCOMIUM on the labours of the man, who, by the ruling ecclesiastics of his own time, was represented as an object of universal detestation. He will not suffer his judgment to be warped

* Du Pin. Maimbourg.

by the specious terms which Aleander introduced into his harangue, but will reflect on the real force and meaning of those terms when thus used by a Roman catholic in defence of his peculiar tenets. The ambiguity of Scripture; the infallibility of the pope's interpretations; the intrinsic virtue of the sacraments; the natural strength and power of man; the merit of good works, and the obligation of monastic vows: these are among the avowed doctrines of the papal system; and as they were evidently at the bottom of Aleander's ostensible creed, we need not wonder that Luther's opposition to them should have been uppermost among the complaints of this zealous nuncio, strenuously defending the established corruptions. The enlightened Protestant, however, with these facts in view, will have no difficulty in determining how much our PERSECUTED REFORMER deserves the thanks of Christian posterity, for setting forth and confirming the supremacy of Scriptural authority, and for unfolding to mankind the long-lost doctrine of the desperate corruption of fallen human nature, and the preciousness of redemption by grace. These fundamental doctrines Luther taught with great zeal and precision. It was impossible therefore that he should not at the same time teach, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."* And how could this be done without calling forth the objection, "Why then doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" Or how could our theologian have established the grand Christian peculiarity of justification by faith in Jesus, and have laid down the true principle of obedience,—faith which worketh by love,—without overturning that idol of self-sufficiency, the Pelagian notion of free-will, which even from the days of Justin Martyr had made some encroachment on the church?†

Well would it be, if Christian people better understood their obligations to kind Providence for having raised up, at the critical moment, so penetrating a spirit, and so sound a divine, as Luther. These obligations would be better known, and also felt more sensibly, were we in general more accurately acquainted with the improvements and discoveries which Luther made. The pride and vanity of the human heart lead us to think highly of modern attainments in religious knowledge, and to

* Rom. ix. 16.

† See Vol. i. p. 142.

depreciate the productions of the sixteenth century.—“The reformers of that period did great things for the times and circumstances in which they lived, but their notions were in many respects crude and inaccurate, and liable to great abuse.”—Such things are EASILY said, and by being often said, they are apt to make durable impressions. It is very true that Martin Luther, as well as all the reformers, did say things which are liable to abuse. I know nothing that is not liable to abuse. Even the Holy Scriptures themselves are thus liable in the hands of depraved men. Nevertheless, I am by far more confident that the conceits and refinements, and attempts at system, which abound in modern divinity, are hurtful to religious minds, and have a direct tendency to corrupt the pure word of God, than I am that the plain and manly expositions of Scripture by Luther have any such tendency; or that these are so likely as the former to mislead humble, contrite souls, who are seriously seeking peace of conscience and eternal salvation. Again: “Several expressions of Luther, it is said, were chiefly levelled against popery, and might be proper enough in his time; but they ought not to be trusted to the bulk of readers in our age, without many necessary guards and cautions.” Something like this has frequently been said of his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. It is much to be wished, that such censures were not hazarded without a thorough examination of the merits of the case. For my part, after a most diligent perusal of that Commentary, I am well convinced, that no subsequent writer whom I have seen, has treated the important subject of the Epistle to the Galatians with greater perspicuity, or illustrated the mind of the apostle more happily, or inculcated a spiritual and holy practice more forcibly, or interspersed his expositions with more safe, and sound, scriptural cautions against abuses of every sort, than the author himself has done throughout this admirable work.—Let this hint suffice.

The papal historians* would persuade us, that the emperor and the other princes were so terrified by Alexander's representation of Luther's impieties, that they instantly proceeded to deliberate on the very important subject, and resolved to condemn the growing heresy as subversive of the fundamentals of the Christian religion. But from the

* Maimbourg. Du Pin. Pallavicini.

accounts of these writers themselves it is not difficult to collect, that besides the eloquence and arguments of Aleander, there were other weapons which the orator condescended to use, for the purpose of influencing the decision of the Diet of Worms.

We are informed, by an authority which in this instance is not to be disputed, that Aleander acquainted the cardinal Julius de Medicis, then at Rome,* how the Lutheran party increased daily in strength, how the minds of the Germans were alienated from the Roman court, and how great was become the danger, lest all that nation should be lost to the pope through a want of care and timely exertions. These tidings roused the pope's advisers to adopt vigorous measures. They augmented the authority of Aleander, the legate; they supplied him with MONEY; and they empowered him to distribute, among persons of distinction, the most efficacious diplomas, with a view to obtain their assistance in the papal cause. Our author does not scruple to avow, that it was by the operation of this threefold engine that Aleander gained over to his own purposes the members of the German diet.†

After all, it does not appear that this celebrated diet came to any regular voting on the business of Luther in full assembly. The records of their proceedings, published by authority at the dissolution of the Diet, take notice of many weighty affairs which were then considered and brought to a conclusion; but they contain not a single word on the subject of religion: which silence may seem the more remarkable, when we attend to the circular letters of Charles V. in calling together the members of the assembly.‡ The original materials of this important part of the history are so imperfect and inconsistent, that much care and study are requisite to develope the truth, and to separate it from the very partial and erroneous representations of the popish writers.—The learned reader will be the best qualified to appreciate the success of my labours.

A patient examination of the evidence relative to the Lutheran transactions at Worms, has convinced me that the following account, connected with the preceding, is more full and satisfactory, and also more consistent, and nearer the truth, than any statement of the same events which has fallen in my way.

* This cardinal was afterwards pope Clement VII.

† Pallav. i. 25.

‡ Page 417

The elector of Saxony, foreseeing the important questions, of a political as well as of a religious nature, which would be agitated at the next Diet, took care to be at Worms some weeks before the meeting of the general assembly. There this wise and good prince, from conversations with the emperor and others, soon discovered that mischief was meditated against Luther. His enemies, in general, were contriving to have him brought before the Diet, with the design, no doubt, of securing the person of the heretic: and we find that the emperor had once so far acceded to their wishes, as to issue express orders for his appearance. The summons for this purpose was sent to the elector; but this prince refused to concur in that mode of conducting the business, and Charles recalled his summons. All this took place before the middle of January 1521.* In fact, at this moment the cautious Frederic scarcely knew what course to steer. Perfectly upright and conscientious, he wished for nothing so much as an impartial hearing of the whole cause, and an equitable sentence in consequence; but he had great fears, lest, by calling Luther to Worms, he should entangle him in the dangerous snares of his adversaries; and moreover, he did not then know what Luther himself might think of such a proposal. In this obscurity of circumstances, the good sense and good principles of the elector determined him to adhere steadily to two points: 1. By no means to compel Luther to appear among his adversaries against his own will; and, 2. In every event, not to permit him to stir a step towards Worms without a complete and unequivocal safe-conduct, nor to write any letters of passport in his behalf without the express directions of the emperor.—In the mean time he caused Luther to be made acquainted with the intentions of his malignant adversaries; and the question to be put to him, What he would do if he should be cited to appear at the Diet?

The answer of our intrepid Reformer was perfectly in character. He said, if he should be called by so high an authority as that of the emperor, he would conclude it to be the divine will that he should go; and if violence were done to him, as probably might be the case, he would recommend his cause to God, who had saved the three children from the fiery furnace. And if it should not please God to preserve him, his life was but a small thing

* Com. de Luth. xc.

compared with that of Christ and with HIS sufferings. "Though kings and princes," said Luther, "conspired together against the Lord and his Christ, yet as it is written in the same psalm, 'Blessed are they that put their trust in him.' It is not our business to determine whether more or less benefit will accrue to the Church from my life or my death; but it is our bounden duty to beseech God that the reign of Charles may not commence with blood, shed in an impious cause. And for my part, as I have often said, I would much rather die by the Romanists alone, than that he should be involved in this business. But if I must die, not only by pontifical but also by civil injustice, God's will be done. You have here my resolution. Expect from me any thing rather than flight or retractation. I mean not to flee; much less to retract. So may the Lord Jesus strengthen me: I can do neither without scandalizing godliness, and hurting the souls of many." This letter was addressed to his friend Spalatinus, the elector's secretary.*

To the elector himself he writes, as being the subject of this prince, with more ceremonious respect; and probably with a suspicion also, that his letter might be shown to the emperor. He calls the elector his most illustrious prince and gracious master, and says,

"I rejoice from my heart that his imperial majesty is likely to undertake the management of this cause, which is indeed the cause of the Christian world in general, and of the whole German nation in particular.—I have ordered copies of all my writings to be transmitted to your grace; and I now most humbly offer again, as I have repeatedly offered before, to do every thing which becomes a servant of God and of Christ to do, the moment I shall be informed what my duty is from the clear evidence of the Holy Scriptures.

"I have therefore with all submission to entreat your grace to present my humble petition to his imperial majesty, that he would graciously be pleased to grant me a safe-conduct, and sufficient security against every kind of violence, as I have great reason to be apprehensive on this account; and that he would also appoint learned and good men, unsuspected, and well skilled in the knowledge of their Bibles, to try this cause; and that for the sake of Almighty God I may be protected from every

* Com. de Luth. xc.

outrage till I have been indulged with a fair hearing, and have been proved to be an unreasonable, ungodly man, and, in short, no Christian.

“ I humbly beg also, that the secular power may so far interfere in my behalf, that my adversaries, the defenders of the Roman see, may be compelled, during this state of the business, to desist from their wicked and malicious attempts against my life, honour, and dignity, and in particular from publicly burning my writings; though as yet I have never been tried, much less convicted of any crime.

“ In regard to myself, if I am but allowed a safe-conduct, I shall, in humble obedience to the emperor's summons, most cheerfully appear before the next general Diet at Worms; and there, by the help of Almighty God, so conduct myself before just, learned, and impartial judges, that all may be fully convinced that I have done nothing from an inconsiderate, rash, refractory spirit, or with a view to temporal honours and advantages; but that every line I have written, and every doctrine I have taught, has proceeded from a conscientious regard to my oaths and obligations. I own myself unworthy to be styled a doctor in sacred learning; nevertheless, it will appear that I have constantly intended to promote the praise and glory of God, the happiness and salvation of the catholic church, the prosperity of all Germany, the overthrow of dangerous abuses and superstitions, and the emancipation of the whole Christian world from innumerable, tyrannical, impious, and disgraceful grievances.

“ That the gracious elector of Saxony, together with his imperial majesty, may deign to turn a Christian eye to the present state of religion, burdened and enslaved as it is in so many ways, is the prayer of,

“ The elector's obedient and suppliant chaplain,

“ MARTIN LUTHER.”

The extraordinary piety and firmness so manifest in these letters, must have been highly pleasing to the elector of Saxony; especially as both the public and private proceedings at Worms every day convinced him more and more of the necessity of our Reformer's presence. He was disgusted to find that secret consultations, to which he was not admitted, were continually held at the emperor's apartments, for the purpose of ruining Luther: moreover an imperial mandate was issued, by which the

magistrates were commanded to collect together all the writings of the heretic. Lastly, attempts, though fruitless, were made by the emperor to persuade Frederic, that it was his peculiar duty to call his own subject, Dr. Luther, before the assembly by his single authority, and also to supply him with the necessary passports.* The tendency of these machinations was sufficiently evident; and nothing was so likely to disconcert them all, as the actual appearance of the ACCUSED, secured by an effectual safe-conduct. Also, if Aleander's malignant sophisms and gross misrepresentations had impressed or puzzled the minds of any of his hearers, nobody could so soon or so completely undeceive them as Luther himself, by his knowledge, his eloquence, and his plain dealing.

Influenced by these and similar considerations, the elector of Saxony, in full Diet, urged the propriety of proceeding no further in the affairs of Luther, till he himself could be heard in his own cause. The question before them, he said, was not merely, whether certain doctrines were false, and ought to be proscribed, but also whether Martin Luther was the author of them. Common justice therefore required that he should be called before the diet, that they might learn from himself whether he really avowed and propagated the sentiments which were said to be found in his books.

It was impossible on any decent grounds to resist so wise and reasonable a proposition. In fact, the whole Diet almost without exception, though for various and even opposite reasons, concurred in this sentiment of the elector. The different imperial orders thanked the emperor for his good intentions in securing by his mandate the books of Luther, and in general expressed their approbation of the measure. But still, they feared no material good was to be expected from the publication of that mandate. Luther's doctrines had spread throughout Germany, and had excited much thinking, much speculation and design; for all which there now seemed no remedy but to give the author a fair hearing. "Let him have a safe-conduct," said they, "and let the question be put to him, 'Whether he will retract such articles as militate against the holy Christian faith which we have received from our ancestors and preserved until this time.' When that business is over, he may be heard on other

* *Id.* Add. ii. lxxxviii. and Add. xc.

points, and the Diet may come to such equitable resolutions as the case shall require. If indeed he should refuse to recant, then, no doubt, the orders of the empire will strenuously support the emperor's decree with all their might." They concluded with entreating his imperial majesty to adopt some measures by which many practices of the Roman see might be effectually corrected :* for, said they, they are become highly injurious and intolerable to the German nation.

Aleander, however, was excessively alarmed at the prospect of Luther's appearance, and strenuously exerted every nerve to prevent it. The reasons, in opposition, adduced by this popish champion, might seem too futile and ridiculous to merit notice, if the most celebrated Roman catholic historians had not astonished posterity by recording them with apparent approbation and triumph. On few occasions has the weakness of the papal cause been more manifest ; or the blindness and obstinacy of its advocates more inexcusable. The pope, said Aleander, who is supreme judge in religious concerns, has already determined this matter ; his decisions ought not to be questioned. Besides, this Diet must be considered not as a sacred, but profane assembly, and therefore not competent to the trial of such causes : neither will Luther himself acknowledge the authority of the tribunal.

The conduct of Charles V. on this occasion, appears to have been regulated chiefly by artful political maxims. One historian indeed informs us, that he expressed a great desire to SEE the man† who had caused such commotion in the church ; and this curiosity in the young monarch may seem neither unnatural nor improbable. We are sure, however, that by calling Luther before the Diet, he gratified his grand patron, the elector of Saxony ; and in regard to the court of Rome, he preserved his peace with them by dexterously compromising the matter in the following way. He declared, that though it was absolutely necessary to bring the ACCUSED before the Diet, lest it should be said that he had been condemned unheard, still that he was only to be heard so far as to answer, Whether

* These and many other interesting particulars in this account are not so much as hinted at by the popish writers. They are taken from very authentic accounts of the proceedings at Worms, deposited among the Saxon archives at Weimar.

† Varillas.

he would or would not recant the errors which he had published.

Nevertheless, Aleander bitterly complained that a downright heretic, already condemned by the Roman pontiff, should be treated with so much lenity and concession. "He ought to have been heard no further; or if it were thought proper to condemn him again with new formalities, most certainly that public faith ought not to be granted to him, which would have been denied to any man who was only accused of the crimes for which Luther stood condemned at the present moment. He was moreover a factious man, of great volubility of language, and great presence of mind; a man who spoke with such tones of voice and such ardent looks as to be capable of raising a sedition." Then there was nothing, he added, which Luther so eagerly longed for as a solemn public disputation, where he might have an opportunity of exhibiting his talents, and confounding such an assembly as the Diet of Worms; the members of which were so little informed in theological questions that he would easily puzzle and deceive them by his address and subtleties; and make them doubt whether in condemning him they had given to his expressions the right sense in which their author intended them to be understood.*

Such a representation, when stripped of all disguise, amounts briefly to this: That Luther ought to have been crushed at once by the strong hand of despotic power; and that the truth would be most effectually stifled by his non-appearance at Worms. It may be added, that the papal legate was not a little concerned for the credit and honour of the Roman see. The sixty days, allowed by pontifical lenity for the heresiarch's repentance, had elapsed long ago; and Luther was now deemed a detestable and excommunicated heretic, to whom no kindness or respectful consideration could be shown, without incurring the manifest displeasure of the pope.

It may, therefore, be considered as a clear proof of the great decline of the papal authority, that, notwithstanding all the arts and all the menaces of Aleander, Charles ventured to grant Luther a safe-conduct to Worms, and again in return to Wittemberg. He even with his own hand wrote to the heretic, and calls him **OUR HONOURABLE, BELOVED, DEVOUT, DOCTOR MARTIN LUTHER, OF THE AUGUS-**

TINE ORDER. He then proceeds to inform him, that the emperor and the sacred imperial orders, then met in congregation, had determined to examine him respecting certain books which he had published; that they had joined in granting him a safe-conduct; and that he must not fail to appear before the Diet within twenty-one days, reckoning from the sixth of March, the date of the letter. The emperor concludes with repeating his assurances of protection from every injury and violence.*

Still the friends of Luther remained dissatisfied with even these pledges for his safety; so deeply were their minds impressed with what had happened to John Huss at Constance. It was agreed, therefore, that several of the princes of the empire should also particularly and distinctly sign the safe-conduct, as a further security against the hostile designs of the Romans. Lastly, the sagacious elector of Saxony had the spirit to demand, and the perseverance to obtain from the emperor, in writing, an express renunciation of the detestable popish tenet, that GOOD FAITH IS NOT TO BE PRESERVED WITH HERETICS.† This very curious fact, which originated in the wise precaution of Frederic, seems to have been kept a most profound secret till about the year 1541, when it was revealed to Pontanus, the elector's chancellor, by Conrad Pius P., son of C. Peutinger, one of Charles's privy counsellors.‡

Though this explicit grant of a safe-conduct was so important a point gained for Luther, that probably his life depended upon it, yet the elector of Saxony had by this time seen too much of the dispositions, both of the emperor and of the members of the Diet, to indulge any great hope of a favourable issue of the pending contest. The following short extracts from his letters are highly instructive:—

1. The Romans with their adherents, particularly the men who wear red hats, § attack Luther in every way.

2. Dr. Martin is summoned hither, but I know not whether he will choose to come. Matters proceed slowly; and I augur no great good.

3. The cardinals and bishops oppose Luther with all their might. May it please God to order every thing for good! I wish it were in my power to serve Martin.

* Luth. Op. ii. 163. † See account of the Council of Constance.

‡ Com. de Luth xcii.

§ Cardinals.

Most certainly I would omit nothing that is proper to be done which might at the same time be useful to his cause.

4. Were it in my power I would most readily assist Martin in every thing which he could reasonably require. But, believe me, I am pressed to take part against him by such persons and in such a way as will astonish you when I come to explain the truth. The grand object here is to drive him into exile. Whoever appears in the smallest degree to wish him well is instantly deemed a heretic. May God order all things for good: and no doubt **HE** will not desert the right cause.

5. Martin's cause turns on this point,—whether he is to be sent into banishment? There is no remedy against these things. The event, however, is in God's hands; and if through **HIS** help, I should be able to come to you, I shall have surprising things to tell. We have peculiar need of the Divine, not human assistance. I would have you to know, that not only **ANNAS** and **CAIAPHAS**, but also **PILATE** and **HEROD**, are the adversaries of Luther.*

The doubt expressed by the elector, respecting the reformer's obedience to the mandate which had summoned him to Worms, did not arise from any suspicion of timidity, or of feeble resolution in his character, but from a just apprehension that he might conclude his appearance before a court, which had already predetermined not to hear his defence, would prove altogether vain and nugatory. It appears from a letter to Spalatinus, that a temporary hesitation of this sort was actually produced in Luther's mind, by the information which he had received of the transactions at Worms. He writes thus on the 19th of March, 1521:—

“ My kind friend—I have received your account of the various things which I shall be commanded to do at Worms, particularly of the doctrinal articles, which I must recant. Depend upon it I will recant no one thing, unless they produce better arguments against me, than that I have maintained things in my books which are contrary to

* The letters, of which these are extracts, are addressed by Frederic to his brother John, who succeeded him. 1, 2, and 3, were written before Luther came to Worms; 4, while he was there; and 5, after he had left that place. It appears clearly from 4 and 5, that the elector was not then aware that the enemies of Luther designed any thing against him severer than a sentence of banishment.

what they are pleased to call the rights and customs of the church. I shall not scruple to answer the emperor, that if I am called merely for the sake of recanting, I shall not come; since precisely the same thing may be done without this journey to and fro. Certainly if recantation be all that is wanted, I may recant here. Now if, in consequence of this answer, his majesty should denounce me as an enemy of the empire, and should cite me to appear for the purpose of taking away my life, I shall obey the summons. For if Christ Jesus do but favour me, I am determined never to flee, or desert the word of God by leaving the field of battle. However, I see most distinctly these bloody-minded men will never rest till they have taken away my life. I own I could wish that the **PAPISTS ALONE** might be guilty of my blood.”*

Notwithstanding this pause, Luther presently resolved upon his journey to Worms. Perhaps his great patron, the elector of Saxony, secretly directed his motions; or perhaps further reflection convinced him that to appear before the Diet, secured as he was by safe-conduct, was the wisest step he could take. Possibly on the one hand he might indulge a hope, that after all, when he should once look his adversaries in the face, they would be ashamed to bid him hold his tongue; and on the other, he could not but foresee that his non-appearance would certainly be construed into contempt, or timidity and consciousness of guilt. It would be said, that after having so often and so long demanded a fair hearing of his cause, and after having received a direct challenge from the papal advocates, he had now refused to meet them before so impartial and, in every respect, unexceptionable a tribunal as the general Diet of the empire.

He was accompanied in his journey by several friends, among whom is mentioned Jodocus Jonas, a name precious in the annals of German reformation. Jonas† was

• Com. de Luth. xci.

† Justus Jonas was a doctor of divinity, and a canon of the collegiate church of Wittemberg. He was made president or principal by the elector in 1521. The profession of the canon law belonged to this presidency, but Jonas chose to employ his time in studying the Scriptures. He read lectures in divinity to the students every day; and gave up a portion of his salary to a lecturer in the canon law. He refused to accept the presidency on any other terms. He was one of the most intimate friends both of Luther and Melanethon.—Seck. Sup. Ind. xli.—Melch. Adam.

at that time principal of the collegiate church of Wittemberg, and was afterwards called Justus Jonas. Some others joined them on the road. Luther was expressly forbidden to preach at any of the towns through which he had to pass; but our reformer declared, that he had never promised to obey that injunction, and that the word of God ought not to be fettered. Accordingly he preached at Erfurt as he went, and at Eisenach as he returned, and in various other towns.* The hilarity and musical entertainments, in which he indulged himself as he travelled, are invidiously spoken of by writers devoted to the popedom. In fact, music with him was a favourite and useful amusement; and it is certain that his temper was more cheerful, courteous, and sociable, than might have been expected in one who, with a superstitious conscience, had been so long addicted to Romish austerities. What we have formerly observed of his moral character need not be here repeated; and in regard to his diversions, it will be allowed that so hard a student required a due proportion of these; and no proof can be adduced of his ever exceeding the bounds of moderation, temperance, and decorum.

Luther was considerably indisposed in the course of this journey. In a letter to Spalatinus, who was then at Worms, he says, "All the way from Eisenach to Frankfurt, I have experienced such languor as I never felt before. Besides, I hear the emperor has published a mandate to frighten me.† But Christ nevertheless lives; and I will enter Worms though all the gates of hell and all the powers of darkness oppose. I mean to terrify and to despise the prince of darkness.

Let the student of ecclesiastical history scrutinize as narrowly as possible the behaviour of the champion of protestantism at THIS CRITICAL MOMENT. The more

* Du Pin, the most moderate of all Luther's adversaries, accuses him of declaiming, in the course of this journey, "in his usual manner against good works and human laws. One, says he, builds a temple, the other goes a pilgrimage to St. James or to Rome; a third fasts, prays, and goes barefoot: all this is of no use, and ought to be put an end to; for whatever comes from the pope is only to oblige us to GIVE. This were a small matter, if they did nothing but pilage men; but the worst is, they would persuade them that these bodily works can justify and save them." Such is Du Pin's quotation from Luther, and such his complaint.

† This was the order above mentioned, issued by Charles, for collecting together all Luther's books.

rigorous his inspection, the greater, if I mistake not, will be his admiration and satisfaction. The hearts of Luther's best friends began to fail them as the danger approached. At Oppenheim, near Worms, they solicited him in the most vehement manner to venture no further. What favour could he expect from men who already began to break their word with him? The pope had published a definitive bull against him on January the third;* and the emperor, in compliance, had ordered all his writings to be seized; and, to disgrace him still more, the imperial mandate, as well as the papal bull, was every where put up for the public information.† Neither was it yet forgotten that an imperial safe-conduct had not been sufficient to protect John Huss from Romish deceit and cruelty.

When a great man is actually in the hands of his enemies, the die may be considered as cast; and in such cases it happens not unfrequently that courage and firmness appear to be the natural offspring of extreme and unavoidable danger. But while Luther was at Oppenheim, which is the moment now in the reader's contemplation, we are to remember it was in his power, as yet, to have turned aside from the road to Worms, and sheltered himself from the fury of the papists. In fact, he was here met by Martin Bucer,‡ who had been sent with

* Page 400 of this volume.

† Du Pin, c. x.

‡ Bucer was a very learned and able protestant divine, born at Shelestadt, in Alsace. He was uncommonly well qualified for business, and concerned in many of the ecclesiastical negotiations respecting the Reformation. He came to see Luther at the Diet of Worms, spent some days with him, embraced his opinions, and in a short time professed them openly.—Melch. Ad. Afterwards he preached the protestant doctrines at Strasburg. He was indefatigable in his endeavours to reconcile the Lutherans and Zuinglians; and his great desire to effect a lasting peace between the parties, seems to have led him to use general, and perhaps, ambiguous expressions in his writings. If I am not mistaken, he thought Luther's notions of the sacrament too strong, and that of Zuingle's too weak. Justus Jonas is much too hard upon him, when he describes Zuingle as something rustic and a little arrogant; Ecolampadius and Hedio as very mild and good-natured; but Bucer, as cunning as a fox.—Seck. ii. p. 140. Jonas, however, was at that time heated with the disputes at Marpurg. The reputation of Bucer for learning, wisdom, and integrity was so great, that he was invited into England by archbishop Cranmer in 1549, and appointed lecturer in divinity in the university of Cambridge, with triple the usual stipend. His lectures were solid and full of erudition; he continued to read them till the year 1551; when, at the age of sixty-one, he died of the stone and several other painful disorders. He was buried with the greatest respect in St. Mary's church; and the

several horsemen on the express errand to entreat him to take refuge in the castle of a neighbouring knight. Here also we find that he received letters from his friend Spalatinus, the contents of which must have been peculiarly distressing to his mind; as in a similar way they fervently entreated this persecuted servant of God to desist from proceeding further in this journey.

It was under such circumstances, and to such solicitations, that this faithful servant of Christ, with his usual intrepidity, supported by divine grace, returned that ever-memorable answer, "That though he should be obliged to encounter at Worms as many devils as there were tiles upon the houses of that city, this would not deter him from his fixed purpose of appearing there: that these fears of his friends could only arise from the suggestions of Satan, who apprehended the approaching ruin of his kingdom by the confession of the truth before such a grand assembly as the Diet of Worms."* Luther is said to have mentioned the circumstance a little before his death, and to have made this observation: "So fearless can God render a man:—I do not know whether at this day I should be so bold."

The fire and obstinacy that appeared in Luther's answer to the kind remonstrances of his friends at Oppenheim, seemed to prognosticate much warmth and vehemence in his conduct before the assembly.† But it was not so. On the contrary, the reader may be surprised to find how much the zeal which animated our reformer was tempered on this occasion, notwithstanding the fervour of his natural constitution, with a laudable moderation and decorous respect both for his civil and ecclesiastical superiors, proving that the whole was the *effect of divine grace*, and not the consequence of natural intrepidity of mind.

Luther arrived at Worms on the sixteenth of April, 1521; and as he stepped from his open vehicle he said these words, in the presence of a prodigious concourse of people, "God will be on my side."‡

It has been truly observed,§ that the reception he there met with was such as he might have esteemed a full reward of all his labours, if vanity and the love of applause

vice-chancellor ordered the members of all the colleges to attend his funeral.—Melch. Ad. and Bayle's Dict.

* Luth. Op. ii. Du Pin, c. x.

† Maclaine in Mosh.

‡ Pallav. Du Pin.

§ Robertson.

had been the principles which influenced his conduct. Spalatinus, who was on the spot, assures us that no prince ever experienced such honours. Immense crowds daily flocked to see him; and his apartments were constantly filled with visitors of the highest rank. In short, he was looked on as a prodigy of wisdom, and respected as one who was born to enlighten the understandings of mankind, and direct their sentiments;—a homage more sincere as well as more flattering than any which pre-eminence in birth or condition can command. Luther lodged with the Teutonic knights, near the elector of Saxony; and on the day after his arrival was conducted to the Diet by the marshal of the empire.*

On his appearance before that august assembly he was directed to be silent till questions should be put to him. The official of the archbishop of Treves, who was the emperor's speaker on the occasion, then produced a bundle of books, and informed Luther that, by order of his imperial majesty, he was directed to propose two questions to him. The first was, whether he acknowledged those books which went BY HIS NAME to be his own; and the second, whether he intended to defend or to retract what was contained in them? Upon this, before any reply could be made, Jerome Schurff, a celebrated doctor of the civil laws, who had come from Wittemberg in the character of Luther's advocate, called out with a loud voice, "You ought to recite the titles of the books." The official then read over the titles in succession. Among which were Commentaries on the Psalms; a little Tract on Good Works; a Commentary on the Lord's Prayer; and other books on Christian subjects, in no way related to controversy.†

"I shall answer the question," said Luther, "as concisely, and as much to the purpose, as I possibly can. 1st. Unless the books have been mutilated or altered by fanciful

* The crowd was so great that it was found necessary to conduct Luther privately through a garden, and by back stairs, to the hall, where the emperor and the Diet were assembled.—Luth. Op. ii.

† The reader may smile at the management of Dr. Schurff, who, quite in the character of a practitioner of the law, took this very fair opportunity of bringing into view and exposing the unjustifiable lengths to which the enemies of his client had proceeded in condemning to the flames even his most unexceptionable writings. The official called on Luther to own or disown such books as went by his name. "Let us hear the titles, let us hear the subjects of the books" said the lawyer.

sciolists, or by the arts of my adversaries, they are certainly mine. 2ndly. Because this question relates to FAITH and the salvation of souls, and because it concerns the word of God, the most important of all objects in heaven and in earth, and which deservedly requires of us all the most profound reverence, it would be equally rash and dangerous for me to give a sudden answer to such a question ; since, without previous deliberation, I might assert less than the subject demands, and more than truth would admit ; both which would expose me to condemnation from that sentence of Christ, ‘ Whosoever denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven.’ For this reason I humbly beseech your imperial majesty to grant me a competent time for consideration, that I may satisfy the inquiry without injuring the word of God, and without endangering my own salvation.” After some deliberation, he was allowed to defer his answer till the next day, on the express condition, however, that he should deliver what he had to say *vivâ voce*, and not in writing.

On the following day he was told that he ought not to have petitioned for delay, because he had well known, for a long time, what would be the nature of his examination ; and, moreover, that every one ought to be able at any moment to give an account of his faith ; and much more a doctor of great reputation, like Luther, who had been long exercised in theological discussions. At length however, said the official, return an answer to the question of the emperor, who has so kindly granted you your request.

Luther then rose, and spoke before the emperor and the princes, in the German language, to the following effect :

“ I stand here in obedience to the commands of his most serene imperial majesty and the most illustrious princes, and I earnestly entreat them that they would deign to listen to this cause with clemency. It will appear, I trust, to be the cause of truth and justice ; and therefore if, through ignorance, I should fail to give proper titles to each of the dignified personages who hear me, or if in any other respect I should show myself defective in politeness, they will be pleased to accept my apology with candour. I have not been accustomed to the refinements of the court, but to the cloisters of the

monastery ; nor of myself have I any thing further to say, than that hitherto I have read lectures and composed books with that simplicity of mind which ONLY regards the glory of God and the instruction of mankind.

“To the first question,” continued Luther, “I gave a plain and direct answer ; and in that I shall persist for ever. I did publish those books, and I am responsible for their contents, so far as they are really mine ; but I do not answer for any alterations that have been made in them, whether by the crafty malice of enemies or the imprudent officiousness of friends.

“In regard to the second question, I humbly beg your most serene majesty and their highnesses to take especial notice, that my publications are by no means all of the same kind. Some of them treat only of piety, and of the nature of faith, and morals ; and these subjects are handled in so evangelical a manner, that my greatest adversaries are compelled to pronounce them innocent, profitable, and worthy to be read by Christians. The pope’s bull, indeed, though it actually declares some of my books innocent, yet, with a monstrous and cruel INDISCRIMINATION, CONDEMNS THEM ALL. Now were I to retract SUCH writings, I should absolutely stand alone, and condemn those truths in which friends and foes most perfectly agree.

“There is another species of my publications, in which I endeavour to lay open the system of the papal government, and the specific doctrines of the papists, who, in fact, by their corrupt tenets and bad examples, have made havoc of the Christian world, both in regard to body and soul. There is no denying this : witness the universal complaints now existing, how the papal laws and traditions of men most miserably entangle, vex, and tear to pieces the consciences of the faithful, and also plunder the inhabitants of this famous country in ways most shameful, tyrannical, and scarcely credible ; notwithstanding that Germany by her own laws has declared, that any doctrines or decrees of the pope, which are contrary to the Gospel or the sentiments of the fathers, are to be deemed erroneous, and in no degree obligatory.—If, therefore, I should revoke what I have written on these subjects, I should not only confirm the wicked, despotic proceedings to which I allude, but also open a door to further abuses of power, that would be still more licentious and

insupportable ; especially if it were said among the people, that what I had done was confirmed by the authority of his most serene majesty and a general meeting of the empire.

“ Lastly, the defences and replies which I have composed against such individuals as have laboured either to establish the Roman tyranny, or to undermine my explanations of the fundamental principles of religion, constitute a third class of my publications. And in these, I freely confess, I have been betrayed into an asperity of expression, which neither becomes me as a clergyman, or as a Christian : however, I pretend not to set myself up for a saint, neither do I plead for the strictness of my life, but for the doctrines of Christ. But, it is not in my power to retract even these writings as far as the matter contained in them is concerned ; lest by such a step I should become the patron of the most arbitrary and impious usurpations, which in consequence would soon gather strength, and spend their fury on the people of God in more violent outrages than ever. Yet, since I am but a man, and therefore fallible in judgment, it would ill become me, in supporting my poor paltry tracts, to go further than my Lord and Master Jesus Christ did, in the defence of his own doctrines ; who, when he was interrogated concerning them before Annas, and had received a blow from one of the officers, said, “ If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me ? ” If then, our Lord, who was infallible, did, nevertheless, not disdain to listen to any thing that could be said against his doctrine even by a person of the lowest condition, how much more ought such a contemptible being as I, who am all imperfection, to be ready to attend to whatever arguments can be brought in the way of objection to my positions ! I entreat therefore your majesty and the members of this illustrious assembly, to produce evidence against me ; and however high, or however low, be the rank of the person who shall be able, from the sacred Scriptures, to convict me of error, I will instantly retract, and be the first to throw the book into the fire.

“ Permit me to suggest for the consideration of us all, that as Almighty God is wonderful and terrible in counsel, surely it behoves this august assembly to examine with especial care, whether the object which my enemies so ardently long to compass, does not in fact amount to a

condemnation of THE DIVINE WORD ; and whether such a measure, adopted by the first German Diet of the new emperor, might not lead to a dreadful deluge of evils. Under the protection of God, there is reason to augur well of this excellent young prince ; but take care that you do not render the prospect of his government unfavourable and inauspicious.

“ By a variety of instances from Holy Writ, and particularly by the cases of Pharaoh, of the king of Babylon, and of the kings of Israel, I could prove this important point, namely, that men have ruined themselves at the very moment when they imagined they had settled and established their kingdoms in the most prudent manner. The ruling principle should be, the FEAR OF GOD. HE it is who taketh the wise in their craftiness, and removeth the mountains and they know not, and overturneth them in his anger.*

“ In saying these things, I mean not to insinuate, that the great personages, who condescend to hear me, stand in need of my instructions or admonitions : no,—but there was a debt which I owed to my native country, and it was my duty to discharge it. The reasons, which I have now alleged, will, I trust, be approved by your serene majesty and the princes ; and I humbly beg that you will disappoint my enemies in their unjust attempts to render me odious and suspected. I have done.”†

As soon as Luther had finished his speech, which was delivered in the German language, he was ordered to say the same things in Latin. But he was so much out of breath, and so overcome with heat and the pressure of numerous persons of quality, that he found it necessary to pause a little. Upon which a courtier of the elector of Saxony, supposing him to be disconcerted and afraid to proceed in the Latin language, kindly admonished him to desist from the attempt, and assured him that he had said enough. Luther, however, did not relish this advice ; but having quickly recovered himself, he again went over the same ground in Latin with prodigious animation, and to the very great satisfaction of all his friends, and particularly the elector of Saxony. It appears that this prince was so delighted with the piety, confidence, and ability of Luther on this occasion, that he took Spalatinus aside into his bedchamber, and there expressed his approbation

* Job.

† Acta Worm.

and astonishment in the following manner: "O, how excellently did father Martin speak, both in German and Latin, before the emperor and the imperial orders. He was sufficiently if not rather too animated!"*

We may be sure that that part of Luther's harangue, in which he asserted the ancient honour and independence of the empire, and endeavoured to rouse the princes to vindicate their just rights against the encroachments of Rome, must have been peculiarly grateful to German ears. His adversaries acknowledge that he spoke for two hours with the applause of one half of the assembly; until John Eckius,† the emperor's speaker, having lost almost all patience, before Luther had well concluded, cried out, in much heat and passion, That he had not answered to the point; That he was not called upon to give an account of his doctrines; That these had already been condemned in former councils, whose decisions were not now to be questioned: That he was required to say simply and clearly, whether he would or would not retract his opinions. "My answer," said Luther instantly, "shall be direct and plain. I cannot think myself bound to believe either the pope or his councils; for it is very clear, not only that they have often erred, but often contradicted themselves. Therefore, unless I am convinced by Scripture or clear reasons, my belief is so confirmed by the Scriptural passages I have produced, and my conscience so determined to abide by the word of God, that I neither can nor will retract any thing; for it is neither safe nor innocent to act against a man's conscience."—Luther then pronounced these words in the German language: *Hic stehe ich, Ich kan nicht anders, Gott helff mir, Amen.* "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen."

After the Diet had taken Luther's speech into consideration, their speaker told him;—That he had not answered with the modesty that became his character and situation. That if he had retracted those books which contained the main part of his errors, he would have suffered no persecution for the rest. That for him who had revived the errors condemned at Constance, to require a refutation and conviction from Scripture, was the wild proposal of a man scarcely in his senses. That, on such principles, nothing would be left certain in the Church. That for these reasons, he was once more asked, whether he intended to

* MS. Spal.

† Not Eckius, the Leipsic disputant.

defend all he had written as orthodox, or whether he would retract any part as erroneous.

Luther persisted in his former answer; and entreated the emperor not to permit him to be compelled to do violence to his conscience, by recanting what he felt himself bound to believe on the authority of the word of God, unless he was proved to be mistaken by evident arguments from Scripture. Councils, he repeated, have erred frequently. "You cannot prove that," said Eckius. "I will pledge myself to do it," replied Luther. But night coming on, the Diet broke up.

During the whole of this interesting scene, the special partisans of the pope were filled with indignation; and many of the Spanish Roman catholics followed Luther as he returned home from the tribunal, and showed their enmity by long-continued sneers and hisses.

On the next day, April 19, the emperor directed a schedule, written with his own hand, to be read to the princes in full congregation. The purport of the schedule was this: "His ancestors had always respected the Roman church, which Luther now opposed: he could not with any propriety depart from their example: he was bound to defend the ancient faith, and support the papal see: and as Martin Luther could not be induced to give up any one of his errors, he was determined to proceed against him as a notorious heretic: nevertheless he by no means intended to violate the safe-conduct which had been granted to him."*

This hasty and indiscreet measure, which was partly owing to the juvenile impetuosity and inexperience of Charles, and partly to the incessant solicitation of the papal party, produced complaints and murmurs in the assembly.† The emperor, by giving his opinion first, had broken the established rules of the Diet. He ought not to have given his judgment, till all the other states had given theirs. Such a procedure was esteemed a prejudging of Luther's cause, and manifestly tended to abridge the electors and princes of their right of voting freely in the matter before them. Party-spirit ran high at this moment. Acrimonious papers on both sides of the question were publicly affixed to the walls; and the most violent and even threatening expressions are said to have been used. Had Luther been a man of a worldly temper, or actuated

* Acta Worm.

† Du Pin.

by political considerations, he might easily have turned these critical circumstances to his own advantage. Could he have been persuaded only to temporize a little, and to explain away or even soften a few of the most offensive positions in his publications, there seems abundant reason to conclude, that he might have gained an easy victory over his enemies at Worms, and at the same time have given a severe blow to the papal authority—so great was the impression he had produced on the members of the Diet, and so odious was become the systematic oppression of the Roman see.

But a true servant of God rarely suffers himself to be influenced by what are called the prudential maxims of men of the world. His conduct is straight and steady; and he commits the event to God. This holy, this Christian temper of mind, was eminently exemplified in the behaviour of Luther, during the remaining conferences at Worms.

Charles V. no doubt soon perceived the mistake he had committed, in having sent so premature a message to the Diet. That assembly, notwithstanding the peremptory declaration of the emperor, continued all that day, and all the next, in consultation, and no official information was sent to Luther, respecting a matter in which he was so deeply interested. This misunderstanding, however, was compromised in this way: Charles, at the instance of the Diet, consented that the heretic should be allowed a few days longer delay, during which time such of the princes as pleased might endeavour to persuade him to recant his errors; and if they succeeded, he promised that he himself would take care he should be pardoned by the Roman pontiff.*

Accordingly, on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of April, incredible pains were taken by the princes, electors, and deputies of various orders, to shake the resolution of this instrument of the Reformation. In particular, the archbishop of Treves summoned him to his own lodgings, where, in the presence of several persons of the greatest distinction, he was earnestly exhorted to be less obstinate, and to submit his own judgment to that of holy councils. He was told, that though he had written many good things, yet some of his books had excited incredible dissensions and tumults: and that if he persisted in those

sentiments, the emperor would assuredly proceed to banish him from the country. Much was added concerning the necessity of laws, and of obedience.

Luther humbly thanked the princes for their clemency and good-will towards him. He said, " he by no means censured councils in general, but only a part of the proceedings at Constance in regard to John Huss. If the faith of Christ were truly set forth, and Christ's flock were fed in a real gospel pasture, there would be no need to burden the Church with human traditions. He allowed that he ought to obey magistrates, even wicked magistrates ; that the precepts for this purpose were to be taken in their plain meaning, and that he had often taught this doctrine in his writings. He was ready to do any thing, provided he was not urged to deny the clear word of God."

Luther was then ordered to withdraw ; and the princes, after consultation, called him again before them, went over the same ground, and concluded with again exhorting him to submit his writings to the judgment of Charles, and of the princes of the empire.

Luther replied, That it should never be said that he declined the judgment of the emperor and the leading orders of the state. He was so far from dreading a scrutiny of that sort, that he wished it to be as accurate as possible, provided always, that every thing was to rest on the authority of the Holy Scriptures. He humbly besought them, therefore, to do no violence to his conscience, by urging him to deny the express declarations of the divine word. They should find him completely obedient in all other respects.

Are we to understand, then, said the elector of Brandenburg, that you will not give way, unless convinced from the Holy Scriptures ? " Yes, most kind and gentle sir," replied Luther, " or by very clear and evident reasons."

Upon this the assembly broke up. When it immediately occurred to the archbishop of Treves, that possibly he might succeed better at a private, than a public meeting. He therefore took Luther into his chamber, with two doctors, namely, Eckius, his official, as above mentioned, and Cochleus, the dean of Francfort, a celebrated papal advocate, who had come to Worms on purpose to oppose the Saxon reformer.

Luther, however, had the good sense and caution to object to a secret conference of this kind, unless several creditable persons, of his own friends, were likewise admitted. This being agreed to, a dispute of some length ensued concerning the rise of various heresies and the decrees of councils; but not the smallest advance was made towards an accommodation.*

It was on the 25th of April 1521, that the archbishop of Treves made his last efforts to reclaim 'this obstinate heretic.'† He commissioned two learned doctors, one of whom was Conrad Peutinger, privy-counsellor to the emperor, to try to the utmost, whether they could not persuade him to submit to the judgment which Charles V. and the several imperial orders should pass upon his writings. Luther, as usual, agreed, provided they would depend solely on scriptural authority; otherwise, he said, nothing could be more opposite to his principles. "Trust not," continued he, "princes, or the sons of men, for there is no safety in them. Cursed is he who putteth his trust in man."

The same persons then entreated him to consent that a selection of various articles should be made from his publications, and that these should be submitted to the judgment of a general council. Luther continued inflexible. Neither threats, nor exhortations, nor promises, availed to make him change his resolution, or vary from the answer he had so often given, respecting the absolute necessity he was under of abiding by the sole authority of the sacred Scriptures.

The elector, archbishop of Treves, appears to have been a bigoted Roman catholic, but a man of gentle manners, and of a humane disposition. His conduct at Worms, in regard to Luther's cause, has been ascribed to different motives, as natural timidity, or friendship for the elector of Saxony. There is, however, no imputation on his sincerity in his negotiations with Luther. So earnestly did this prelate wish for an accommodation of the differences, that when all other methods had failed, he took Luther into his closet, and there, in the kindest manner,—no other person being present,—exhorted him to submit to some of

* Spalatinus and Justus Jonas were among the friends of Luther who were present at this meeting.

† This is the name which had long been given to Luther by the papal party.

the proposals that had been made to him, respecting the final judgment of the emperor and the imperial orders, or of a general council. Luther answered roundly, That he by no means thought it safe to intrust the decision of so important a matter to persons, who, when he was called before them under the public faith, had yet persecuted him afresh, had already given judgment against him, and had even approved of the pope's bull.—Lastly, the archbishop called in Spalatinus, and, in his presence, asked Luther, whether he himself could suggest any healing measures, that were likely to succeed. “Nothing better,” replied Luther, instantly, “than the advice of Gamaliel; ‘If this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot resist it.’ The emperor and the princes may inform the pope, that I feel perfectly assured this whole religious agitation and controversy, in which I am now concerned, will of itself die away in less than two years, unless God be actually on my side.”

What would you do, said the archbishop, suppose an extract of certain propositions from your books should be made, and the articles so extracted be submitted to the judgment of a future council? “I hope, kind sir,” replied Luther, “they would not be those which were condemned by the council of Constance.” I fear they would, said the archbishop. “Then,” rejoined Luther, “I neither can nor will be silent, in regard to such a proposal; for I am sure that the decrees of that council condemned the word of God; and rather than give up the word of God, when the case is quite clear, I WOULD LOSE MY LIFE.”

In about three hours after this conversation, Luther received a message from the emperor, which directed him to leave Worms, “because, notwithstanding the most friendly admonitions and entreaties, he persisted in his contumacy, and would not return into the bosom of the church.” He was allowed twenty-one days to return home; during which time the public faith was pledged for his safety; but he was strictly enjoined not to preach to the people in the course of his journey.

“This is the Lord's will,” said Martin, “and blessed be the name of the Lord!” He then, through the official, returned most respectful thanks to the emperor, and the members of the assembly, for their patience in hearing

him, and their liberal treatment in general. He said, he had wished for nothing but a reform in religion, on the plan of the Holy Scriptures ; nor did he now request any thing for himself, but to be allowed the free use of the word of God. Let that only be granted, and he was ready to undergo every thing without exception, for the sake of his imperial majesty and the imperial orders.—He left Worms on the following day, the twenty-sixth of April.

The elector of Saxony, among all the leading characters assembled at Worms, was the only assured patron on whom Luther could depend. And even this virtuous prince by no means openly avowed the reformer's principles. He contended only for a fair hearing, and an equitable decision.

The landgrave of Hesse, though favourably disposed to reformation, as yet stood aloof, not venturing to join the persecuted party. Luther however informs us, that the landgrave visited him at Worms, conversed on doctrinal points with a jocose levity, and on his departure gave him his hand, using these very remarkable words, " If your cause be good, may God protect you !"

Lewis, the elector Palatine, also, when several members of the diet proposed to imitate the example of the council of Constance, by delivering the church at once from the author of the pestilent heresy, who was then in their power, went so far as nobly to withstand this infamous design, declaring, " it was intolerable, that, for the sake of gratifying certain ecclesiastics, the public faith should be violated ; it was a thing which would brand the German name with eternal disgrace."

Even George the duke of Saxony,* a rigid Roman catholic, expressed himself on the same occasion in the strongest terms of disapprobation : " The morality," said he, " of the ancient Germans, forbade them to violate promises ; and the princes ought to avoid a scandalous transaction of this sort, particularly in the first Diet of the new emperor."

When we reflect on the very few sincere friends whom Luther could number at Worms, it may seem a remarkable part of the history of this memorable Diet, that a poor, private monk, already condemned, and solemnly excommunicated by the pope, should have obtained a safe-

* Paul Sarpi, and Seckend

conduct for this journey, be visited in the manner above described * by the most respectable personages, be admitted into that august assembly of the emperor and princes, be allowed to speak there for hours, be heard with patience and candour, defending his cause, and after all be dismissed in safety, under the public faith, and in spite of numerous and most powerful enemies, who thirsted for his blood, and exerted every nerve to exhibit afresh the horrid scenes of the council of Constance.—The splendid talents and attainments of Luther, the tyrannical oppressions and profligate morals of the Romish clergy, and lastly the state of preparation for a truly evangelical reform, into which men's minds had been brought by the agitation of various religious questions, all these circumstances, no doubt, concurred to procure for the reformer a more gentle and humane treatment than might otherwise have been expected. Pious minds, however, will be disposed to look further than secondary causes. Both in these and the subsequent events they will recognise the hand of an overruling Providence, secretly controlling the designs of wicked men, and directing a variety of critical junctures in human affairs, apparently independent of each other, to co-operate wonderfully in the formation of one great crisis, that should be favourable to the establishment of pure religion in Germany.

As an instrument of promoting the German reformation, Martin Luther was of immense importance; accordingly, his life seems to have been under the divine protection in a peculiar manner. It is true the public faith was pledged for his security in returning home; but the operation of his *SAFE-CONDUCT* was to terminate in twenty-one days: also his adversaries at Worms were meditating a bloody edict against him; and in a very short time, therefore, it was expected that all their violence, malice, and revenge, would be supported with the strong arm of the secular power.

The elector of Saxony foresaw the rising storm; and finding it impossible to protect his subject in the open manner that he had hitherto done, he contrived a plan of concealing him for a season, from the fury of all his enemies. Luther did not much approve the scheme; and would rather have met the difficulty and danger in an open way, and trusted the event to God: but as it originated in

* Pages 436, 437.

Frederic's kindness, he thought it only a becoming respect to his prince to acquiesce in his advice. The secret was revealed to him by Spalatinus on the evening before he left Worms. Three or four persons, in whom Frederic could confide, disguised themselves in masks, and contrived to meet the persecuted monk near Eisenach, on his return home, on the third of May. They played their part well. They rushed out of a wood, secured Luther as it were by force, and carried him into the castle of Wartburg. This business was managed with so much address and fidelity, that he was completely secured from the effects of the impending persecution; his implacable adversaries missed their blow, and became doubly odious to the Germans, who, as they were unacquainted with the wise precaution of Frederic, imagined their favourite countryman was either imprisoned or perhaps murdered by Roman emissaries. It has however been conjectured, and on no improbable grounds, that the whole transaction respecting Luther's concealment, was planned and executed with the knowledge, and even the approbation of his imperial majesty.

Though Charles V. to serve his political purposes* by gaining the friendship of Leo X. seems to have had no scruples in sacrificing Luther to the vengeance of that enraged pontiff and his cardinals, he had yet the precaution not to push matters to extremities against the heretic, till he had first secured an important vote † of the diet in his own favour, and against the interests of his grand rival Francis I. Even his Italian encomiasts allow, that the German princes would probably have resisted the emperor's wishes, respecting the measure just mentioned, if he had previously exercised any severity towards the intrepid defender of their religious liberties. On the other hand, the papal ministers, who did not comprehend the secret reason of the delay of the formalities of Luther's condemnation, became excessively uneasy, lest, after all, they should be disappointed of that complete victory which they had supposed themselves to have actually gained over the reformer and the infant reformation. Moreover, the heretic had been suffered to depart under the protection of a safe-conduct; and the emperor, after having

* See p. 401, for the political motives of the emperor.

† A vote for raising 24,000 German soldiers, in case the king of France should molest the emperor. Pallav.

settled the most material civil affairs, had now dismissed the members of the Diet with a gracious speech.

Besides these, there were also other circumstances which had contributed to put Aleander, in particular, very much out of humour. Luther had been treated, he thought, with too much respect and kindness throughout. The dignity and authority of the Roman pontiff, whose cause the nuncio was bound to plead, had not been sufficiently supported: and the archbishop of Treves had used by far too much entreaty and submission in the course of the private conferences. All this, he said, had only served to increase the confidence, the audacity, and the obstinacy of the heretic, while it had weakened in a very great degree the supremacy of the apostolic jurisdiction.

To pacify this offended legate, Charles V. employed him to draw up the final sentence against Luther, usually called the *EDICT OF WORMS*. In the mean time, under the pretence of having certain questions of lesser importance to propose, he requested the members of the Diet to remain in the city three or four days longer.—These dark manœuvres succeeded.—The bulk of the Italian and Spanish nobles remained on the spot, while many of the German princes and electors went away, among whom were Frederic of Saxony and the elector Palatine.* The latter of these, when he heard of the publication of the severe sentence, declared with indignation that the thing was done without his knowledge.

The edict, as might be expected, was penned by Aleander with all possible rancour and malice. The first part of it states, that it is the duty of the emperor to protect religion and extinguish heresies. The second part relates the pains that had been taken to bring back the heretic to repentance. And the third proceeds to the condemnation of Martin Luther in the strongest terms. The emperor says, that by the advice of the electors, princes, orders, and states of the empire, he had resolved to execute the sentence of the pope, who was the proper guardian of the catholic faith. He declares, that Luther must be looked on as excommunicated, and as a notorious heretic; and he forbids all persons, under the penalty of high treason, to receive, maintain, or protect him. He orders, that after the twenty-one days allowed him, he should be proceeded against in whatever place he might be; or at least

* Com. de Luth. xcvi.

that he should be seized and kept prisoner till the pleasure of his imperial majesty was known. He directs the same punishments to be inflicted on all his adherents or favourers; and that all their goods should be confiscated, unless they can prove that they have left his party and received absolution. He forbids all persons to print, sell, buy, or read any of his books, and he enjoins the princes and magistrates, to cause them to be burnt.*

Aleander introduces into this composition the most acrimonious personal invectives he could invent. He represents Luther not as a man, but a devil in the shape of a man, who had put on the habit of a monk for the express purpose of ruining mankind; and who had revived, collected together, and digested into one vile mass, numbers of heresies condemned long ago; and had also added new ones of his own invention. His preaching about faith was all a pretence, and a contrivance to cover his deceits. He was in reality a subverter of the true faith. Instead of bringing men into the liberty of the Gospel, as he promised to do, he put them under the devil's yoke; and under the specious name of an evangelical profession, he destroyed the peace and charity of the gospel, inverted the order of every thing, and demolished the beautiful fabric of the whole church!

Du Pin was so ashamed of these flowers in Aleander's rhetoric, that he has entirely suppressed them in his account of these transactions.

But the grand papal advocate† boasts that this edict expressed the sentiments of the universal nobility and senate of Germany. He tells us, that when it was read to the electors and princes for their approbation, there was not a single dissentient.—There are, however, two circumstances, mentioned incidentally by this author, which alone would lead a careful reader to suspect the accuracy of this representation: 1. He says, that after the emperor had dissolved the Diet, he held the subsequent meetings, NOT IN THE HALL, where the assembly had usually met, but in HIS OWN apartments. 2. He also says, the edict was voted on the twenty-fifth of May, and signed by the emperor on the morning of the twenty-

* Pallavicini. Du Pin. Gerdes ii. Goldast. Stat. Imp. i. 5, and ii. 143.

† Pallavicini.

sixth, but that it was dated MAY THE EIGHTH.* A full Diet could not conveniently, perhaps not possibly, have assembled at the emperor's apartments: but the ante-dating of the edict of Luther's condemnation would, when that instrument came to be published, naturally induce a belief, that it was the general sense of ALL the members, taken before their dissolution. The reader will probably have anticipated these obvious inferences, and may be inclined to feel some surprise that they did not force themselves on the attention of so able a writer as Pallavicini. —This instance, among many others, shows how difficult it is for a prejudiced historian to be always on his guard: for, in whatsoever degree he may excel in the arts of misrepresentation and concealment, he will frequently fail to smother the truth effectually, provided his narrative is but full and circumstantial.

The following is a brief review of the LEADING CHARACTERS who were present at the Diet of Worms.

1. THE DUKE GEORGE OF SAXONY—.

How very different were the motives which influenced the principal actors in these interesting scenes at Worms! —There wanted not SOME, who, though zealously devoted to the popedom, insisted strenuously on the necessity of a general reformation of the Church. But as they confined their views chiefly to discipline or external morals, and continued to build on the foundation of the self-righteous system, their schemes proved totally abortive. Among these the DUKE GEORGE OF SAXONY † distinguished

* Maimbourg states that it was published on the 26th May in the great church of the city.—ED.

† The judicious student of ecclesiastical history will observe, that I constantly endeavour to draw my proofs from the most unexceptionable sources. For example: to prove the corrupt state of the clergy, and the abominable practices of the Roman see, I would produce the evidence of George of Saxony, a most bigoted papist, whom the Roman catholics always reckon among the most sincere and most active of the holy defenders of their religion. Now, as with them the assertions of Luther and the other reformers go for nothing but exaggerations, misrepresentations, or direct falsehoods, let them listen at least to this duke, their steady friend and advocate, who generally, in religious concerns, opposed his relation the elector of Saxony, and who also entirely approved of Luther's condemnation at Worms. This George of Saxony exhibited to the Diet TWELVE HEADS of the grievances which called loudly for reform. Two of these are briefly as follows: 1. INDULGENCES, which ought

himself. Of this singular character it must be allowed, that he had a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge. In a religious light, he appears to have been the very image of St. Paul before his conversion; to have united a desire of defending establishments and promoting decency of manners, with the most intolerant spirit of bigotry, and the fiercest barbarity of persecution.

2. ALEANDER, AND THE LEADING ECCLESIASTICS.

The more we scrutinize the conduct of the leading ecclesiastics in general, and especially of the pontiff's legate, Aleander, the more thoroughly must we disapprove the principles which governed them in the affair of Luther. The honour of God, the propagation of the pure gospel of Christ, the instruction of the poor and illiterate, and a tender sense of the value of immortal souls, all these things seem to have been purposely excluded from their very thoughts. Then how little regard did these same men pay to the Holy Scriptures! How often did Luther desire them to reason with him on that ground, and to inform his understanding better! solemnly declaring, that if they could prove his doctrines erroneous, he would

to be obtained by prayers, fastings, benevolence towards our neighbour, and other good works, are sold for money. Their value is extolled beyond all decency. The sole object is to gain a deal of money. Hence the preachers, who are bound to set forth truth, teach men nothing but lies and frauds. They are not only suffered to go on thus, but are well paid for their fraudulent harangues. The reason is, the more conviction they can produce among their hearers, the more money flows into the chest. Rivers of scandalous proceedings arise from this corrupt fountain. The officials of the bishops are equally attentive to scrape money together. They vex the poor with their censures for great crimes, as whoredom, adultery, blasphemy; but they spare the rich. The clergy commit the very same crimes, and nobody censures them. Faults which ought to be expiated by prayers and fastings are atoned for by money, in order that the officials may pay large sums to their respective bishops, and retain a portion of the gain for themselves. Neither when a mulct is inflicted, is it done in a way to stop the commission of the same fault in future, but rather so that the delinquent understands he may soon do that very thing again, provided he be but ready to pay. Hence all the sacraments are sold for money; and where that is not to be had, they are absolutely neglected.—2. Another distinct head of the grievances produced by this zealous duke was expressed thus: the scandalous conduct of the clergy is a very fruitful source of the destruction of poor souls. There must be a universal reformation; and this cannot be better effected than by a general council. It is therefore the most earnest wish of us all, that such a measure be adopted. Arch. Vin.

instantly renounce them. No return was made to all his patient and fervent remonstrances, except a despotic order, conveyed in the most insulting language, namely, "That he must recant and submit." They had hoped, by the recent publication of the pope's bull, and by the emperor's mandate for seizing his books, to terrify him, so that he should not venture to appear at Worms; and when this plan had failed, they saw no way left, but to say as little as possible, and proceed, as soon as they could, to crush the Saxon hero by a damnatory edict. This they called standing up for the holy church and dignity of the sovereign pontiff. Nobody is surprised that so sensual and debauched a character as Aleander, who aimed at nothing but his own aggrandizement and the gratification of his passions, should have left no stone unturned to please his great master at Rome, upon whom his promotion depended; but it is a deplorable consideration to view the bulk of the clergy of those times concurring in and supporting the corrupt, systematic plans of such a pope as Leo X., and such a nuncio as Aleander,—whether they did so from a blind bigotry, a profound ignorance, or an exorbitant ambition.

3. THE EMPEROR CHARLES V.

We have already assigned the probable reasons which determined this prince to take so decided a part against Luther and his friends. The succeeding events justify the accounts we have given. The whole history of Charles shows, that, to accomplish his projects, he made a conscience of nothing. Hence the bloody wars which he waged under religious pretences. At Worms his great object was to keep two sets of men, who thoroughly disliked each other, in good humour with himself, and to make them concur in supporting his political views. These, on the one hand, were the pope's ministers, with many Spanish and Italian noblemen; and on the other, the elector of Saxony and the rest of the German princes. In the beginning of the negotiations of the Diet, Charles is said to have exhibited some symptoms of a disposition towards a reform of the ecclesiastical discipline; a political artifice, which had the intended effect. The papal* party were alarmed, and considered their CRAFT as in danger.†

* Comment. de Luth. p 146.

† Acts xix. 27.

Chievres also, the emperor's favourite and minister, let fall an expression which increased their anxiety, and convinced them how absolutely necessary it was now become, that a good understanding, and even friendship, should subsist between the Roman pontiff and his imperial majesty. The downfall of heresy, and the protection of the hierarchy, perhaps its very existence, depended upon it. Chievres had hinted, "that the emperor's conduct towards the pope would be regulated by the pope's conduct towards the emperor, and particularly by his assisting or not assisting Charles's grand rival, Francis the king of France." We are told that Aleander was highly offended with this speech,* as disrespectful to the sovereign dignity and authority of the pontiff. The advisers of Leo, however, thought proper to dissemble the affront; and Charles received a most gracious diploma from his holiness, expressed in the strongest terms of cordiality and satisfaction. The pope even condescended to thank him for having commenced at Worms the consideration of the important ecclesiastical concerns, and entreated him to finish the business which he had so properly undertaken.

The price which purchased these smiles from the pope, was the harsh treatment of Luther, and the various measures preparatory to his condemnation. For the purpose of still further soothing Leo X. and fixing him in the emperor's interests, the final damnatory sentence was passed in the terms of that edict which was obtained in the manner above related; an edict which, when all the circumstances connected with it are considered, casts an indelible stain on the memory of Charles V., and which for its irregularity, injustice, and cruelty, was highly disapproved, even at the time of its promulgation, by dispassionate persons of all descriptions.

4. THE GERMAN ELECTORS AND PRINCES.

The clergy, on account of their avarice, ambition, and profligate manners, were in general, throughout Germany, become exceedingly odious and contemptible. The ecclesiastical dignitaries daily offended THE GERMAN ELECTORS AND PRINCES by their excessive insolence; and the court of Rome vexed both them and their subjects by the most intolerable exactions and tyrannical oppressions.

* Pallav.

There must, therefore, have been present at Worms, many members of the Diet, who, as they could vouch for the truth of Luther's accusations, would be inclined to go great lengths in supporting him in his spirited attacks on the hierarchy, and in his manly zeal for the reformation of abuses. Add to this, the learning, the good morals, and the acknowledged disinterestedness of the Augustine monk, would dispose not a few of these same members to believe him right also in his doctrinal sentiments; their eyes were half opened to the bigotry and superstition of the established system; and their minds could not fail to be much impressed with the reasonableness of Luther's constant appeal to the Scriptures. But not to dissemble the truth, it by no means appears that the pure gospel of Christ had as yet either fully reached their understandings, or deeply laid hold of their affections. The gospel, considered as a practical thing, had made progress chiefly among the lower and middle orders of the Germans. Luther, it is to be feared, could reckon at the Diet of Worms only a very small number of those who had learnt to "count all things but dross and dung to win Christ." He was exposed to a storm of terrific violence: and only those who made a conscience of godliness would voluntarily partake in the danger; the rest would rather stand aloof, watch the effects of the tempest, and wait for its termination. Thus, this reformer, viewed as a bold assertor of the rational liberties of mankind, had the zealous concurrence of most of his countrymen; whilst as a spiritual man, displaying a spiritual understanding and spiritual desires, and defending the simplicity of the faith of Christ, like one of his Master's little flock, he stood almost alone in the august and numerous assembly of Worms.

5. THE ELECTOR FREDERIC THE WISE.—

In this review of the component parts of the Diet, we must not omit this excellent prince, who showed himself so blessed an exception to the predominant character of the members of that assembly. We need not repeat the observations which we have frequently made concerning the dispositions of Frederic. It may be sufficient to say, that, as far as appears, he had a greater insight into true Christian doctrine than any of the princes, and far excelled

them all, both in a pious regard to the Scriptures, and in an exquisite tenderness of conscience. Throughout all the scenes of Roman intrigue and perfidy, in the affairs at Worms, the conduct of the elector of Saxony displays a consistent firmness and a decorous dignity. He was not present in the Diet on the day when Aleander made his celebrated speech against Luther; and the papal historians say that he PRETENDED to be very ill. It is very possible he might have been so disgusted with what he knew of Aleander's proceedings, as to judge him unworthy of a hearing; but the more probable supposition is, that his absence was owing to real ill health. He is well known to have left Worms in an extremely debilitated state of body on May the twenty-third.* A few days after, in a letter to his brother John, written during his journey, he says, that he is so weak he is obliged to be carried in a litter; and intimates, that, in regard to Luther, he knows nothing for certain respecting the ultimate resolutions of the emperor and such members of the Diet as remained at Worms.† Thus the integrity and the plain dealing of this prince are established by every document, even of the most private nature, which has come to light. He encountered the crafty schemes of the pope's advocates, as long as he could, by a direct appeal to common sense and the justice of the case; and when this method failed, he appears to have been concerned in no secret but one, namely, the concealment of the person of Luther; a secret this, as honourable to the conscientious and humane feelings of the elector, as the imperial edict was in the highest degree disgraceful to every individual who promoted its promulgation. If Charles V. connived at the contrivance for protecting Luther, or even actually agreed to that prudent measure, this consideration will go but a very little way towards justifying him from the foul charge of having put the life of our excellent reformer into the most imminent peril: and, moreover, the thinking reader will, after all, be disposed to ascribe that lenity rather to the emperor's fears of offending the German nobility, than to any disquieting qualms of conscience which may be supposed to have harassed his mind on the reflection of having consented to so iniquitous and bloody a sentence.

* Arch. Vin.

† Comment. de Luth. 158.

6. MARTIN LUTHER.—

There was nothing in the transactions at Worms, which more astonished all persons of serious reflection, than that this Augustine monk should have been enabled to acquit himself with so much decorum and propriety in a scene, for which, by his natural temper and habits of life, he seemed entirely unqualified. A circumstance truly marvellous! A mouth and wisdom were given him, which all his adversaries were not able to resist. Such “honour have all his saints.” From this time the cause of God became more respected in Europe. Take notice, however, that while others were admiring the talents, the intrepidity, and the Christian graces exhibited by Luther in this contest, he himself alone was dissatisfied with the exertions he had made. He thought he had not sufficiently honoured his Redeemer. “I have great misgivings,” says he, in a letter to Spalatinus some months after, “and am greatly troubled in conscience, because, in compliance with your advice, and that of some other friends, I restrained my spirit at Worms, and did not conduct myself like an Elijah, in attacking those idols. Were I ever to stand before that audience again, they should hear very different language from me.” In another letter he expresses his dissatisfaction thus: “To please certain friends, and that I might not appear unreasonably obstinate, I did not speak out at the Diet of Worms; I did not withstand the tyrants with that decided firmness and animation which became a confessor of the gospel! Moreover, I am quite weary of hearing myself commended for the moderation which I showed on that occasion.”* Here we observe a humility of spirit unknown to men of the world. The truly godly, and they only, discern such an admixture of sin, even in their best performances, and are so quicksighted in the detection of their own internal evils, that in the very moments while the praises of their extraordinary virtues are resounding from all quarters, they themselves often find little to commend; often they see much to blame, and are heartily ashamed; and so far from glorying in any thing they have done, they have ever recourse to the cross of Christ, as the only sure relief to their burdened consciences.

* Epist. tom. ii.

The court of Rome and their advocates had vainly hoped, by the rigorous edict of Worms, to crush at once the infant reformation. But the effects produced by it were very inconsiderable. Several reasons are to be assigned for this failure; the first and chief of which, as is observed by the pious Seckendorf, should always be reckoned the good providence of Almighty God. Among the subordinate causes, we may enumerate both the disposition and the occupations of the emperor. He could not be sincerely zealous for the execution of a sanguinary and unjust decree, which was obtained by artifice and management, and was much disliked by most of his German subjects. Then he was obliged, after the close of the Diet, to return into Spain, to quiet the civil commotions with which that kingdom was convulsed. The absence of the emperor, during the critical season of the first impressions made on men's minds by the edict, had considerable influence in preventing its execution; and there can be no doubt but his various distractions also, on account of the wars in Italy and the Low Countries, must have had the like effect. The papal historians represent it as a most unfortunate circumstance, that the legal administration of the government, as soon as Charles had left Germany, devolved of right upon the elector of Saxony, and the elector Palatine. Hence it was, they tell us, that the Lutherans triumphed in Saxony; and were allowed to go on in their own way in most other parts of Germany. Some of the princes and magistrates absolutely refused to execute the edict, and others took no notice of it. At Rome there was almost an end of the rejoicings on the supposed extinction of heresy, when the papists heard that the disciples of the Saxon theologian were become, in their language, writings, and actions, more insolent and rebellious than ever!* Aleander received most explicit orders from the cardinal Julius de Medicis to complain of these things to the emperor while he remained in Belgium, and to represent to him, in the strongest manner,—"That if, almost in his own presence, and before the ink, with which his imperial majesty had signed the edict, was dry, the Lutherans had dared to treat so solemn a decree with contempt, what was to be expected from them when the first alarm had subsided, and the emperor was employed in his remote dominions? In fact, from this

* Pallav. ii. 1. Maimbourg, 44. Dupin, c. xii.

celebrated edict of Charles V., and of the whole German empire, no advantage would arise, except that an audacious sect of innovators would have to boast, that they had rendered ridiculous both his imperial majesty, and the Roman pontiff.”*

There is much truth in this representation, provided due allowance be made for the prejudices of the writers devoted to the popedom. Certainly the pope became truly ridiculous; but in regard to the emperor, whose conduct was equally reprehensible and more inconsistent, we must allow, I fear, that an enterprising prince extending his dominions, and surrounded with the splendour of great transactions, will always, according to the maxims of the present world, be sufficiently protected from the imputation of ridicule. The adversaries of protestantism, in their representation of the ecclesiastical differences of these times, never advert to that illumination of the understanding in religious concerns which every day was powerfully influencing the conduct of the Germans. The existing hierarchy, though a compound system of despotism, corruption, and superstition, they consider as perfect in principle, and infallible in operation; and any doubt of its authority, or disobedience to its commands, or deviation from its example, they deprecate as a rebellious attempt to alter what is deemed already complete, and sanctioned by the Divine appointment. And because, in the early opposition to the reigning evils, some excesses or irregularities broke out among the people—which indeed is always almost sure to happen during the effervescence of an incipient reformation,—instead of ascribing these things to the vices of men and the imperfection of human nature, or to the dexterous snares and frauds of Satan, they constantly treat them as the genuine offspring of the principles of the reformers.—Thus do they at first voluntarily shut their eyes to that flood of pure scriptural light which spread itself through Germany; and thus afterwards, by partial and prejudiced views, do they confirm themselves in their deplorable state of darkness and ignorance. It is VERY NECESSARY, that the student of ecclesiastical history should be well guarded against the delusions and the delusive arts of the papal writers, during his researches into the grounds and reasons of protestantism. Yet after all, the best guard will ever be,—an

* Pallav.

accurate, circumstantial knowledge of the leading characters and transactions, which were concerned in the recovery and establishment of religious doctrine and religious liberty. It is a strong conviction of this sort which has induced the writer of this history to employ so much of his reader's attention in a thorough investigation of the principles and motives of the great Saxon theologian. In many other parts of the sequel of this work, he may, consistently with his plan, be extremely concise; but in this part, which should exhibit the causes of the rise and progress of Lutheranism, he finds himself involved in a mass of materials, hitherto indeed totally indigested in any language, yet at the same time so interesting, so instructive, and so precious, that his great difficulty is to condense and communicate, within moderate limits, the substance of the inestimable information they contain.

To conclude this long chapter; let it then be ever remembered with humble gratitude, that, by the blessing of God chiefly through the instrumentality of Martin Luther, it was the revival and the display of gospel LIGHT and TRUTH, which brought about that blessed change in Germany, and afterwards in other parts of Europe, which the papal advocates TO THIS DAY denominate sedition, heresy, and innovation. While the advocates of papal despotism were endeavouring at Worms to take away the life of the intrepid reformer, his books, which had been dispersed in abundance among the distant nations, and translated into various languages, were producing the most surprising and happy effects. Not only in Saxony, but in Denmark, Bohemia, Pomerania, and the towns situated on the Rhine, there were found intelligent expounders of the word of God in simplicity, and faithful preachers of the glad tidings of salvation.—At Strasburg, Matthias Cellius defended the principles of Luther with great spirit and freedom. In his Apology, published in 1523, he had the courage to declare, That the example of all Germany was in his favour; and that, notwithstanding the edict of Worms, there was not a city, or town, or monastery, or university, or even a house or family, in which there were not some of Luther's followers.* Even in many cities of Belgium, where the greatest severities

* Com. de Luth. c. x.

were used to extirpate the new sect,* the pure doctrine of the Gospel maintained its ground against all the powers of darkness. This was a glorious season. The Spirit of God was at work with many hearts; and to those pious souls who, amidst the thick clouds of superstition and ignorance, were sincerely intending to serve God, the light of the DIVINE WORD must have been an unspeakable consolation. The operation of this heavenly light is always to be considered as two-fold; first, as it respects the individual, and secondly, communities. Through “joy and peace in believing,”† it gives ease to the burdened conscience of the individual; it dispels all his slavish fears; and puts his mind in possession of the kingdom of God.‡ Then in regard to such countries or communities as are truly blessed with its salutary influence, it never fails to diffuse over them a spirit of mutual charity, in every view directly opposite to the oppressive, domineering principles of papal superstition and papal tyranny.

* The reader may remember, that in a complimentary letter of Erasmus to Luther, page 314 of this volume, the prior of the monastery at Antwerp is highly commended, as being “almost the only one who preached Jesus Christ.” He had been formerly one of Luther’s scholars. The name of this man was James Spreng. He appears to have preached evangelically on Luther’s plan for more than two years; when he was dragged to Brussels, and there suffered much persecution; and, at last, through fear of the flames, made a public recantation, February 1522, in the presence of Aleander, who was the pope’s commissioner. His recantation was published at Leipsic, and remains a memorable testimony both of papal cruelty and papal corruption of doctrine. The poor man to save his life was induced to abjure thirty of Luther’s propositions; among which are the following:—1. Every action of the best men has the nature of sin, and needs the pardoning mercy of God. 2. Every action also proceeding from the human will needs the same pardoning mercy. 3. A partial sorrowing for sins is blamable.—Not content with this, his persecutors compelled him to pronounce his belief in what THEY called the doctrine of the holy catholic church, —thus: I believe that the works of holy men are free from sin, and therefore meritorious to the obtaining of eternal life. And I also believe that there are some works of man’s free-will, which are faultless, meritorious towards eternal life, and need no pardoning mercy.—“I hope, however,” says Seckendorf, “there are many Roman catholics who will deem these horrid doctrines unworthy of the name of Christian.”—This same James Spreng, being dismissed upon his recantation, began again to preach true Christianity in Flanders, and was again imprisoned at Brussels. He escaped by the assistance of a friend; published the account of his persecutions; deplored his former weakness and fall; and was afterwards, during many years, a preacher of the gospel at Bremen in Lower Saxony.—Sculpt.

† Rom. xv.

‡ Luke xvii. 21.

—Here then we are supplied with infallible rules for self-examination; and well would it be, if both individuals and nations, professing to be Christian, were accustomed to try their own conduct and condition by such tests as could not deceive them.—“By their fruits ye shall know them.”*

* Matt. vii. 20.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.









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